YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

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RECOLLECTION

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CONTENTS

The Thirty-Fourth Night... The Corridor 003

The Thirty-Fifth Night... Vision 029

The Thirty-Sixth Night... The Case 053

The Thirty-Seventh Night... The Doll 065

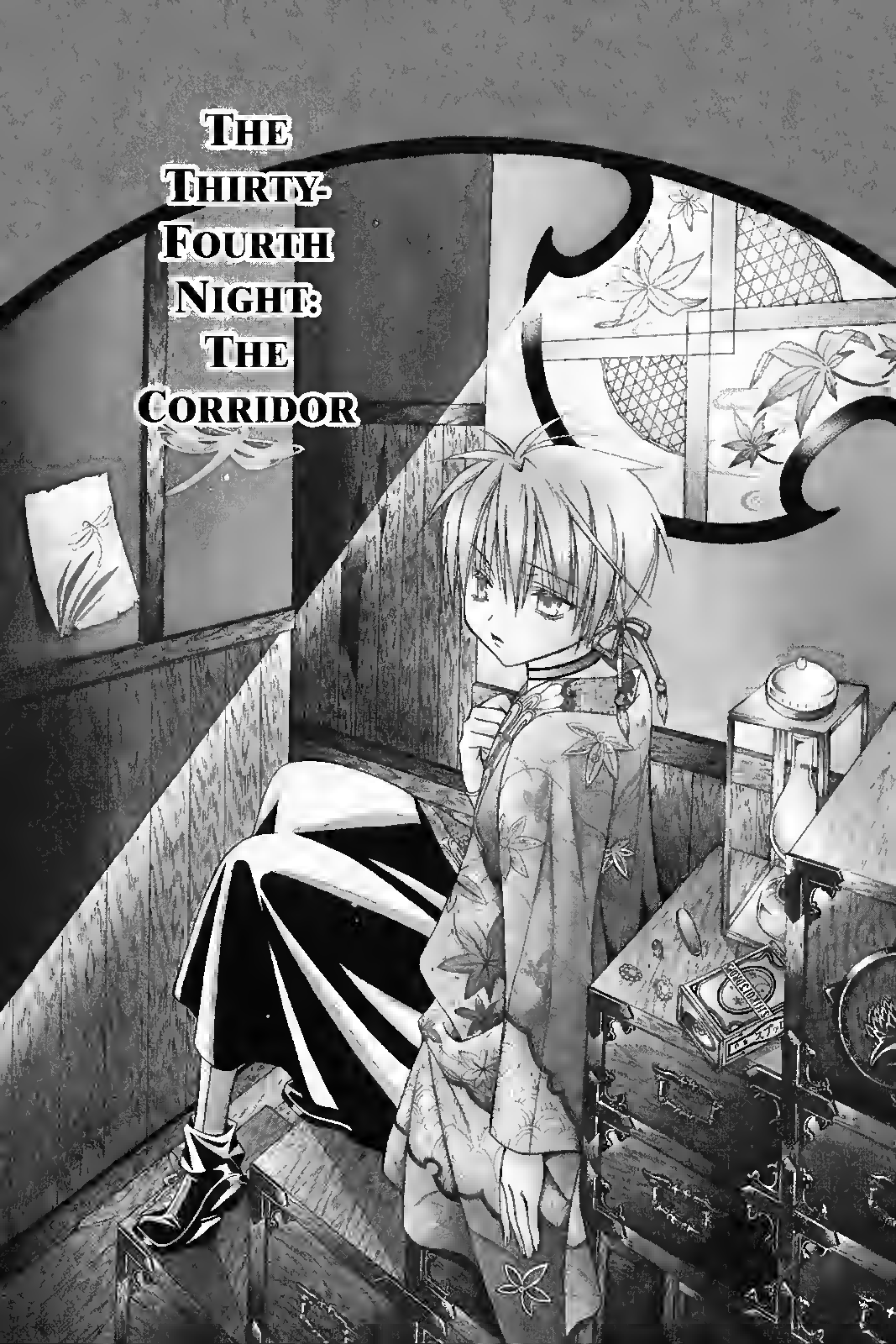
The Thirty-Eighth Night... Desires 089

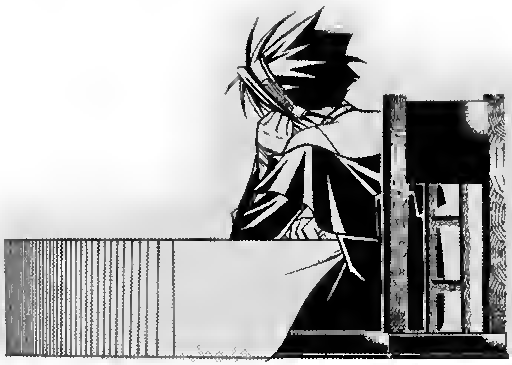
The Thirty-Ninth Night... The Method 113

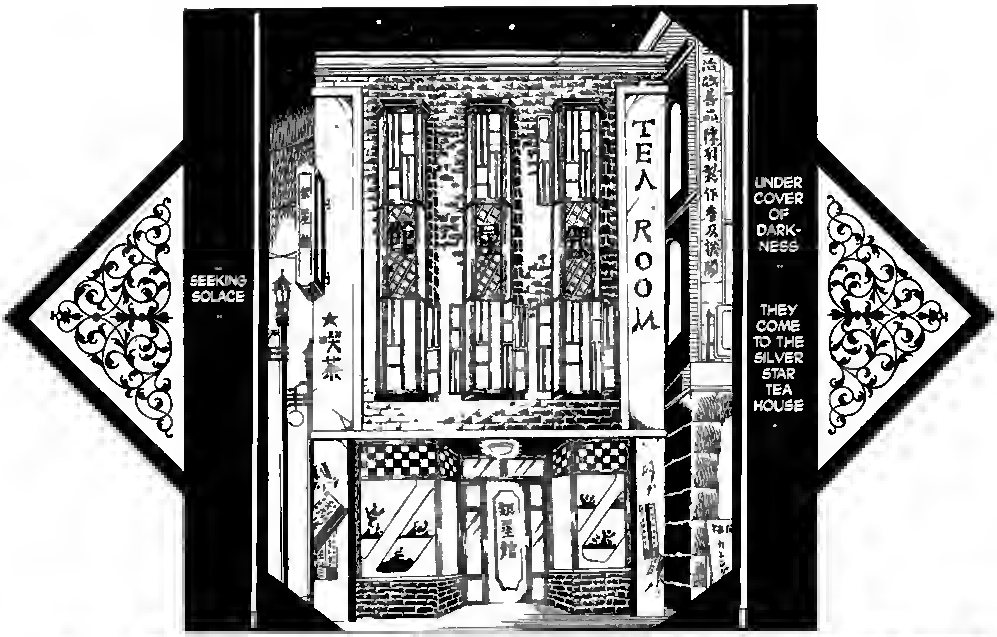
The Fortieth Night... Recollection 137

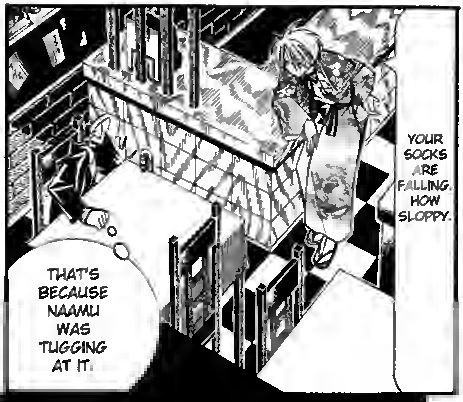
The Forty-First Night... The Cane 161

Afterword... 171


THE THIRTY-FOURTH NIGHT: THE CORRIDOR

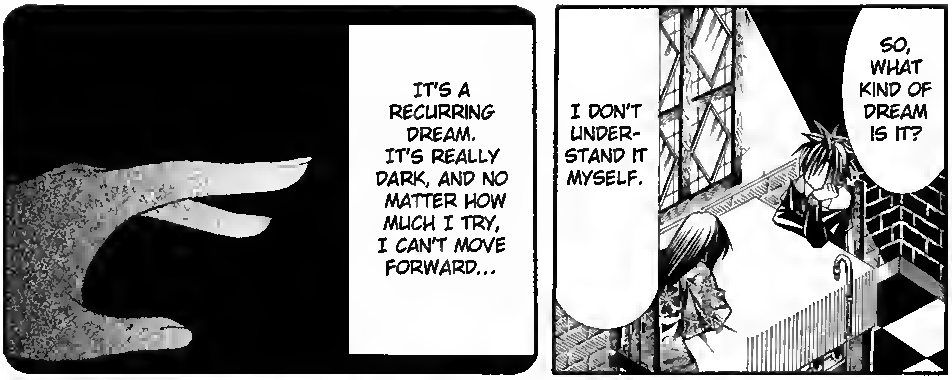


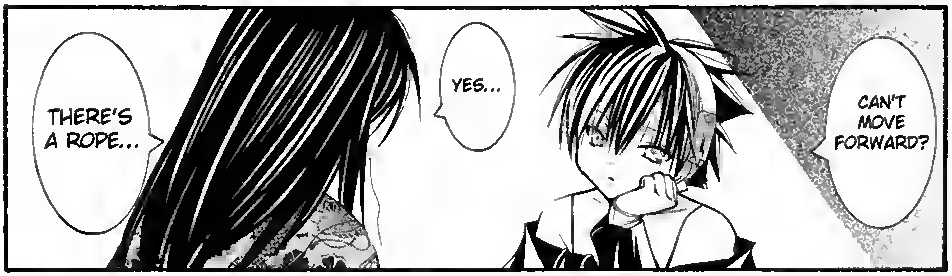

TEA ROOM
SEEKING SOLACE
UNDER COVER OF DARK-NESS
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE

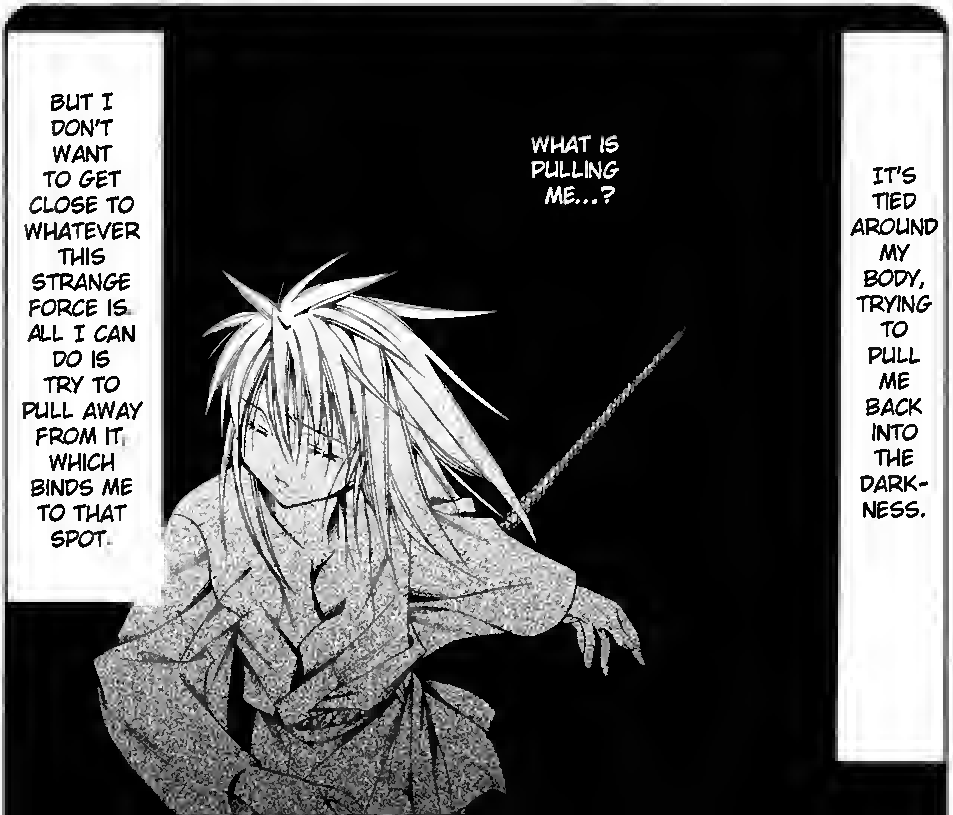

YOUR SOCKS ARE FALLING. HOW SLOPPY.
THAT'S BECAUSE NAAMU WAS TUGGING AT IT.

GOOD EVENING ...
DING
YOU SHOULD REALLY PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR APPEARANCE. ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU WANT PEOPLE TO TRUST IN YOU...

IS HIRUKO THE BAKU HERE?
YES, HE'S IN THE BACK.
OH MY! THIS GIRL...
SHE LOOKS REALLY TIRED...
SWAY
MY NAME IS KIEKO KAKU...


IT'S A RECURRING DREAM. IT'S REALLY DARK, AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRY, I CAN'T MOVE FORWARD...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT MYSELF.
SO, WHAT KIND OF DREAM IS IT?

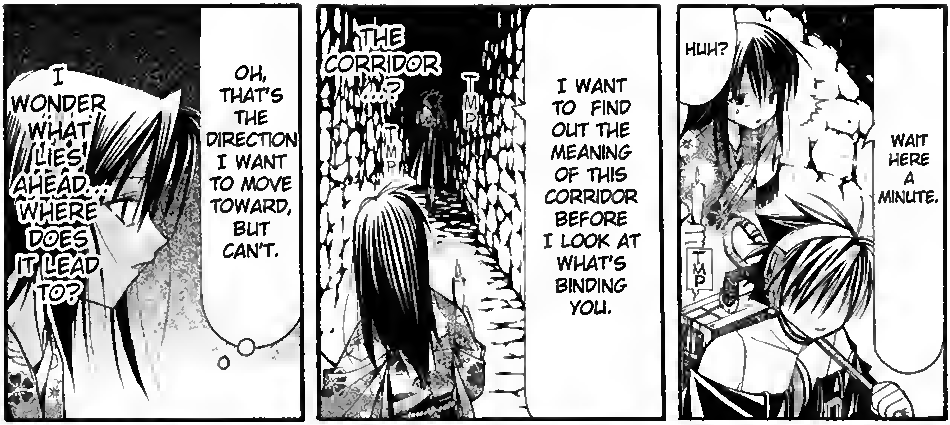

THERE'S A ROPE...
YES...
CAN'T MOVE FORWARD?


BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET CLOSE TO WHATEVER THIS STRANGE FORCE IS. ALL I CAN DO IS TRY TO PULL AWAY FROM IT, WHICH BINDS ME TO THAT SPOT.
WHAT IS PULLING ME...?
IT'S TIED AROUND MY BODY, TRYING TO PULL ME BACK INTO THE DARKNESS.

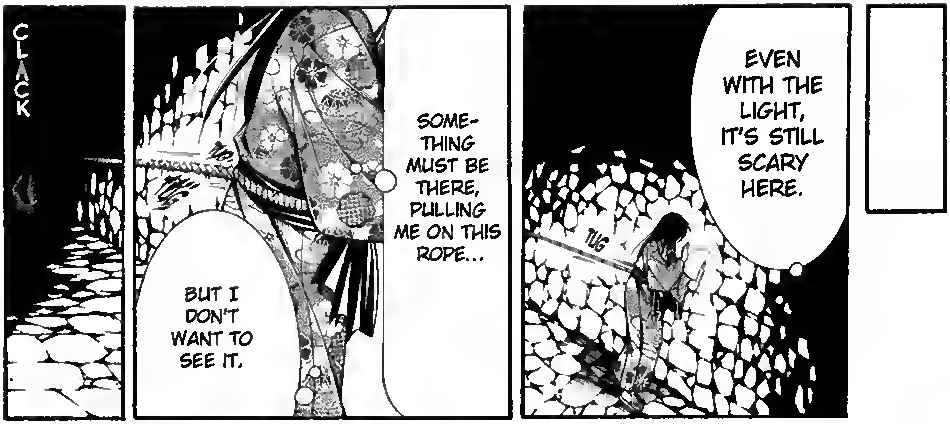
HAVE YOU TRIED UNTYING OR CUTTING THE ROPE?
I CAN'T! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS AT THE OTHER END OF IT, SO I'M TOO SCARED TO CUT IT LOOSE!
THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR HELP. CAN YOU FIND OUT WHAT IT IS?
TWIP
TWIP
...
HERE YOU GO, HIRUKO. IT'LL HELP YOU IN THE DARK.
ALL RIGHT, KIEKO.
LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YOUR DREAM.
CLUNK
FOOSH

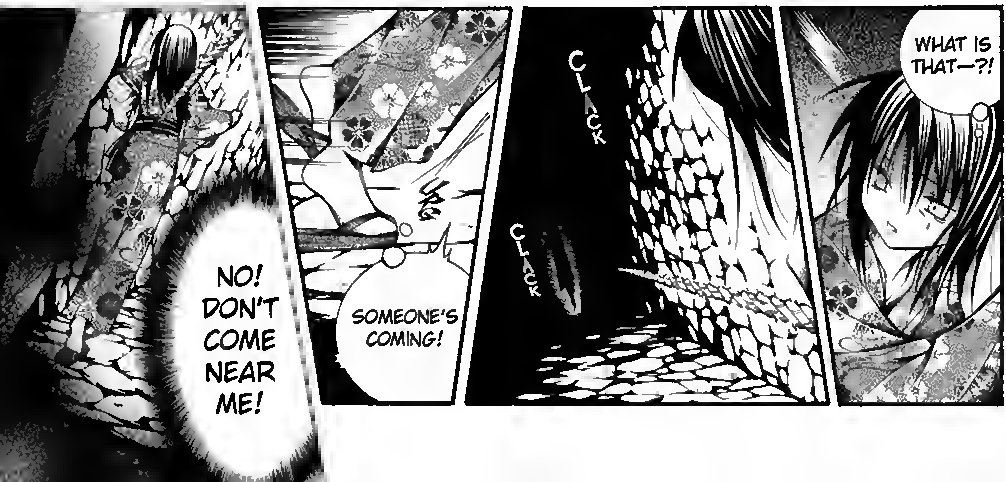
SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

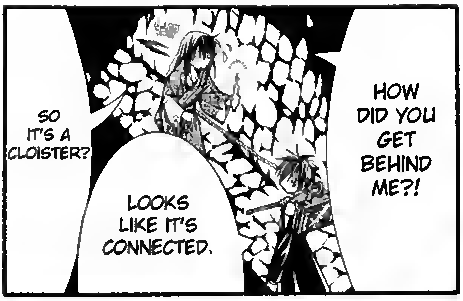
OH...
IT LOOKS LIKE A CORRIDOR.

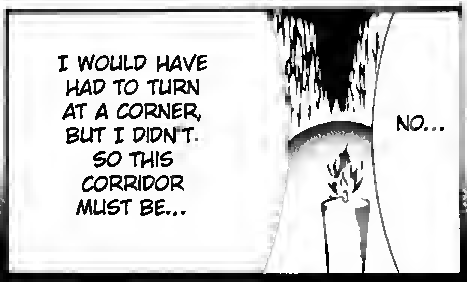

I WONDER WHAT LIES AHEAD... WHERE DOES IT LEAD TO?
OH, THAT'S THE DIRECTION I WANT TO MOVE TOWARD, BUT CAN'T.
THE CORRIDOR...?
I WANT TO FIND OUT THE MEANING OF THIS CORRIDOR BEFORE I LOOK AT WHAT'S BINDING YOU.
HUH?
WAIT HERE A MINUTE.

PERHAPS TO THE WAY OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE...






HOW DID YOU GET BEHIND ME?!
LOOKS LIKE IT'S CONNECTED.
SO IT'S A CLOISTER?

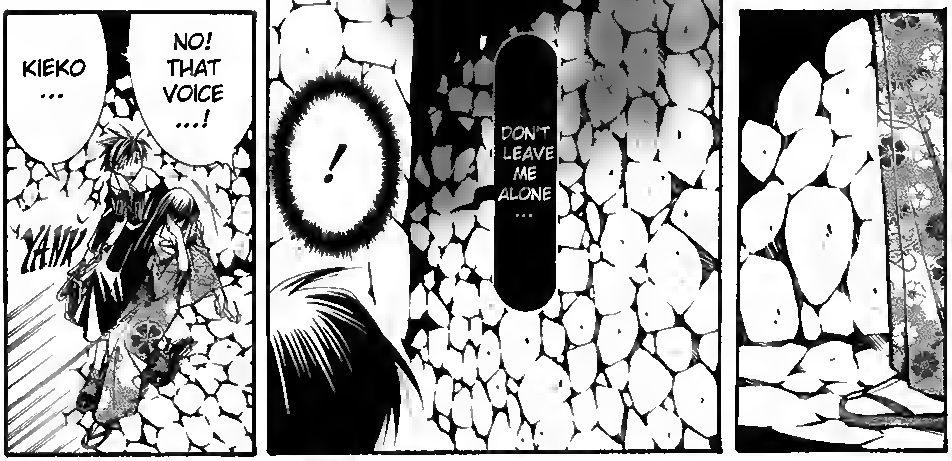

NO...
I WOULD HAVE HAD TO TURN AT A CORNER, BUT I DIDN'T. SO THIS CORRIDOR MUST BE...

OH!

A RING

I COULDN'T SEE IT PROPERLY IN THE DARK.

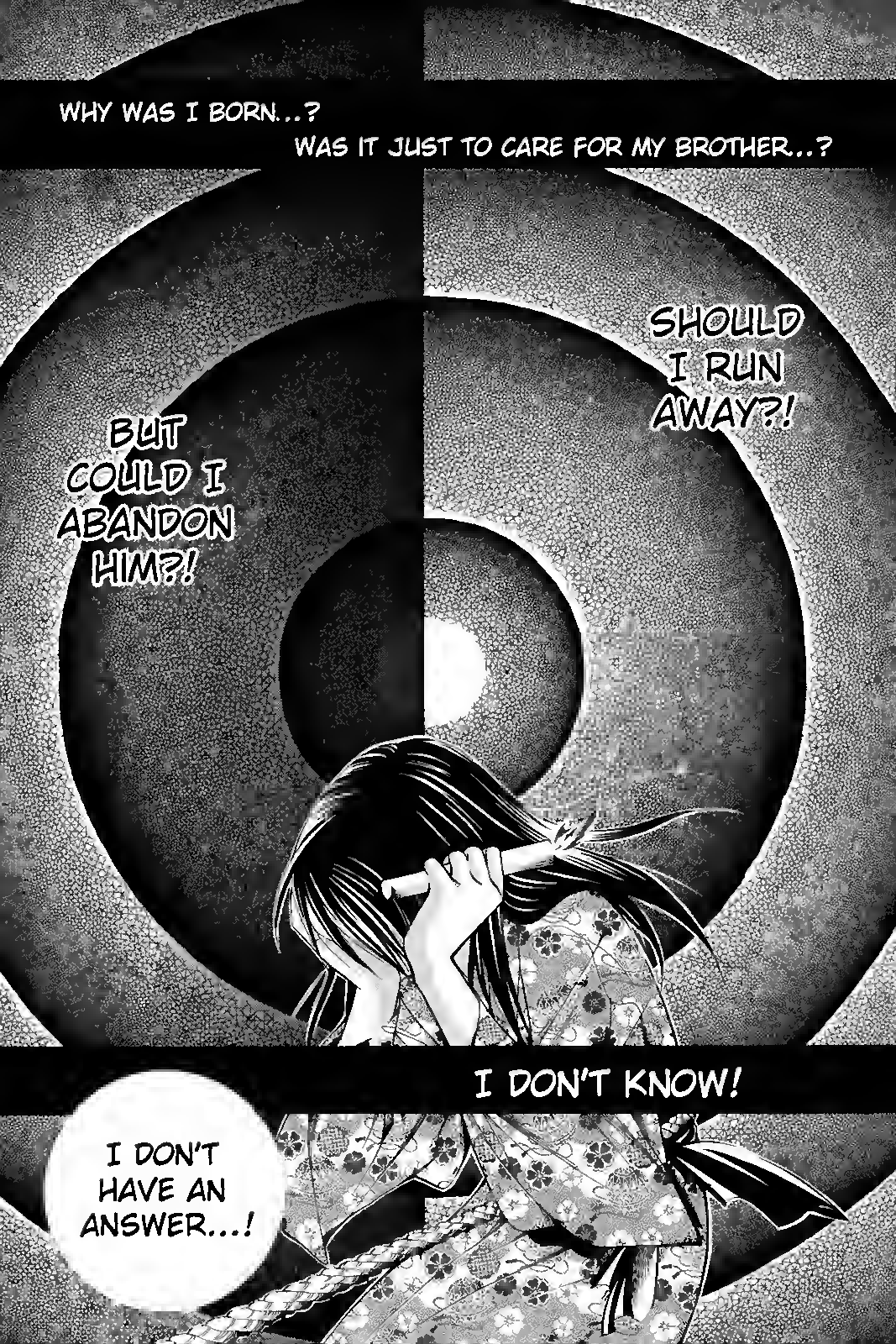
I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO FIND WHAT'S AT THE END OF THE ROPE...
...
I WONDER WHY IT'S IN A CIRCLE.



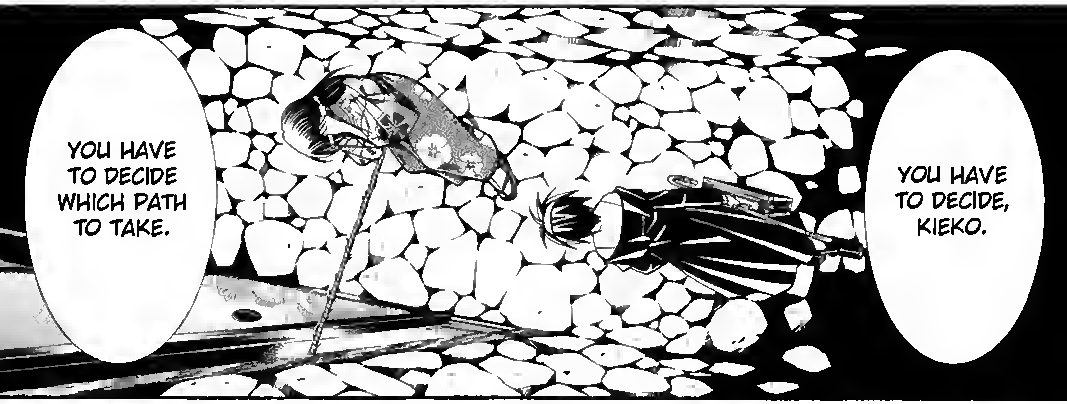
I WAS FORCED TO DO MENIAL CHORES AND LOOK AFTER MY YOUNGER BROTHER.
OUR PARENTS DIED IN AN ACCIDENT SO WE WENT TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES. THEY COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT US.

IT WASN'T EASY TO DO.

I HAD TO NURSE HIM...
SUKU WAS SO ILL HE COULDN'T EVEN SIT UP IN BED.
I SEE A SLIDING DOOR THERE... PROBABLY TO YOUR BROTHER'S ROOM...
DON'T LEAVE ME...
DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE...
SUKU WAS AFRAID I'D ABANDON HIM SO HE STARTED CALLING FOR ME CONSTANTLY.
BUT IT STARTED TO WEAR ME OUT...
ALWAYS CALLING FOR ME DAY AND NIGHT. THIS IS LEADING ME THERE...
SO THIS ROPE WAS TIED TO MY BROTHER.
TUG

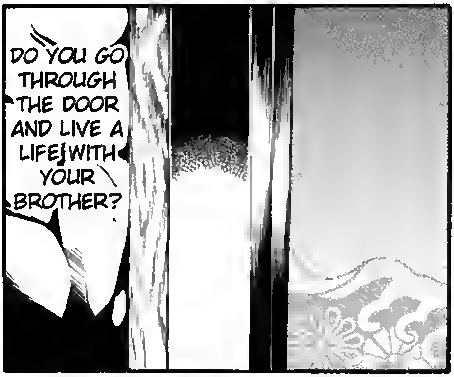

WHY WAS I BORN...?
WAS IT JUST TO CARE FOR MY BROTHER...?
SHOULD I RUN AWAY?!
BUT COULD I ABANDON HIM?!
I DON'T KNOW!
I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER...!

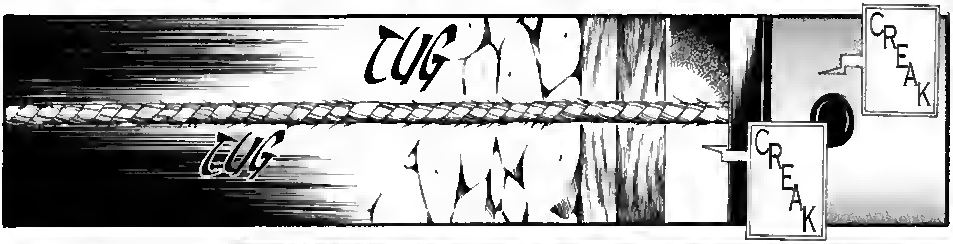
AND THE DILEMMA HAS TAKEN THE FORM OF THIS NIGHT-MARE.
YOU'VE BEEN PONDERING THESE TWO CHOICES, WITH NO CLEAR ANSWER.
SO THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
DO I RUN AWAY?
DO I SACRIFICE MY OWN LIFE?
A NEVER-ENDING CIRCLE WITH NO DESTINATION AND NO ANSWER.
YOU'VE BEEN TIED TO THE AFFECTION FOR THE BROTHER YOU CAN'T ABANDON.
YOU WANT TO CUT LOOSE AND RUN AWAY. BUT YOU'VE BEEN UNABLE TO. STRUGGLING IN THIS CORRIDOR.
THE ONLY WAY TO RELEASE YOURSELF FROM THIS DREAM IS TO MAKE A DECISION.


YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHICH PATH TO TAKE.
YOU HAVE TO DECIDE, KIEKO.

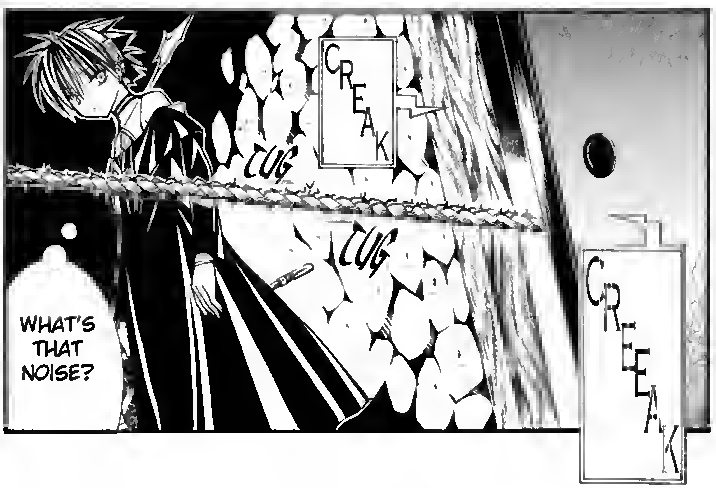
CUG
STAY WITH ME...
UGH... UH...

OR...
STAY WITH ME FOREVER, SIS.

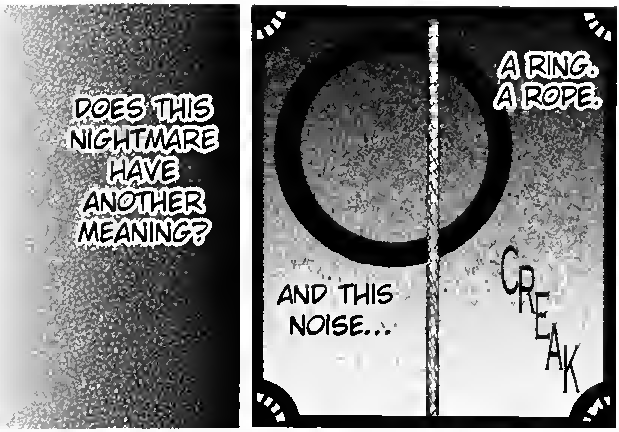

DO YOU GO THROUGH THE DOOR AND LIVE A LIFE WITH YOUR BROTHER?


CUG
CUG
CREAK
CREAK

CREAK
GASP


CREAK
CUG
CUG
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
CREEEAK

PERHAPS THERE'S MORE BEHIND THE DOOR THAN JUST HER BROTHER...



BUT SHE HAS TO MAKE THE DECISION HERSELF.

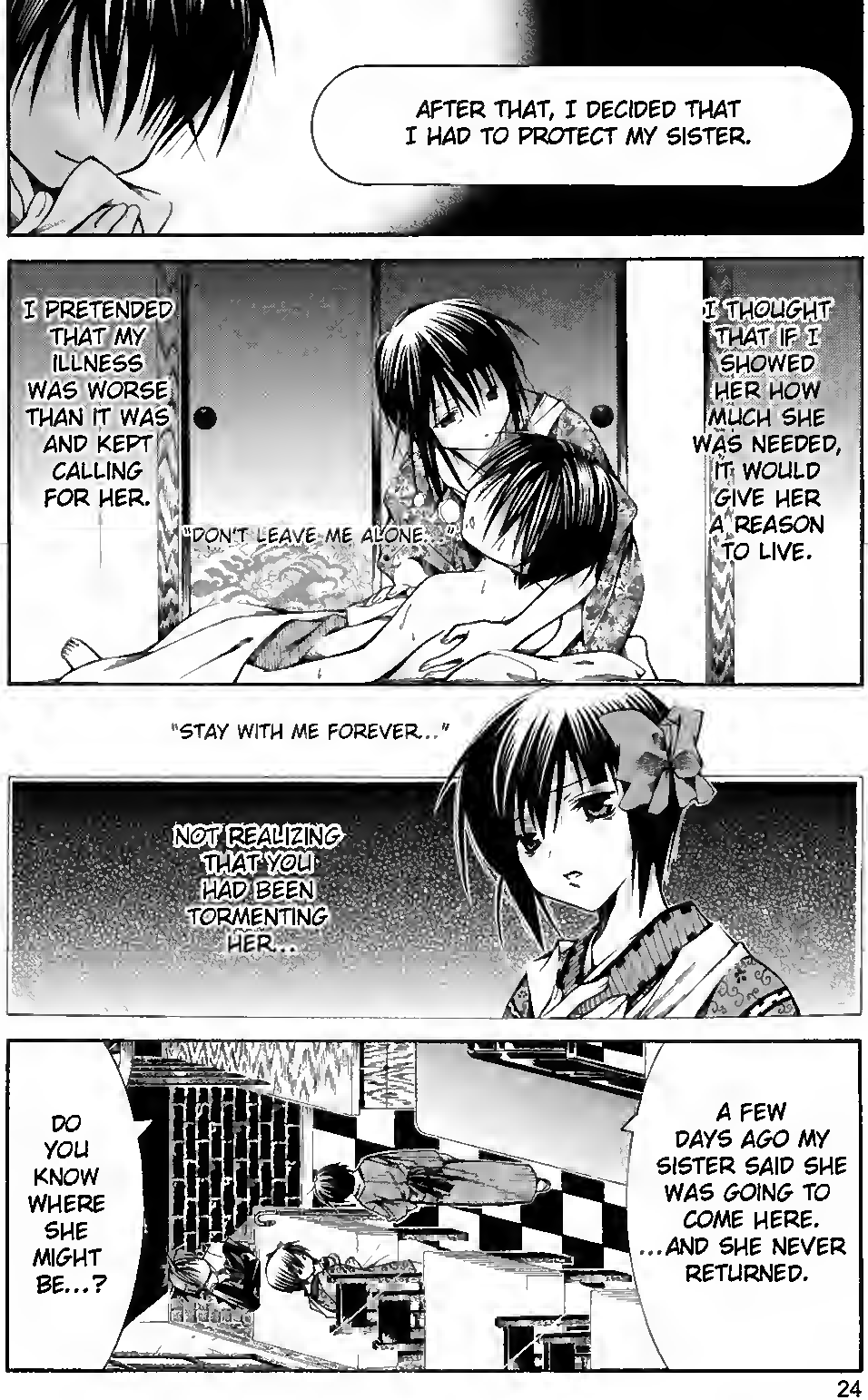
STOP ASKING FOR ME! STOP MAKING ME SUFFER!
YANK
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU I COULD HAVE A DIFFERENT LIFE!
SHIP
IF ONLY I WEREN'T BOUND TO YOU!
NOOOOO!!

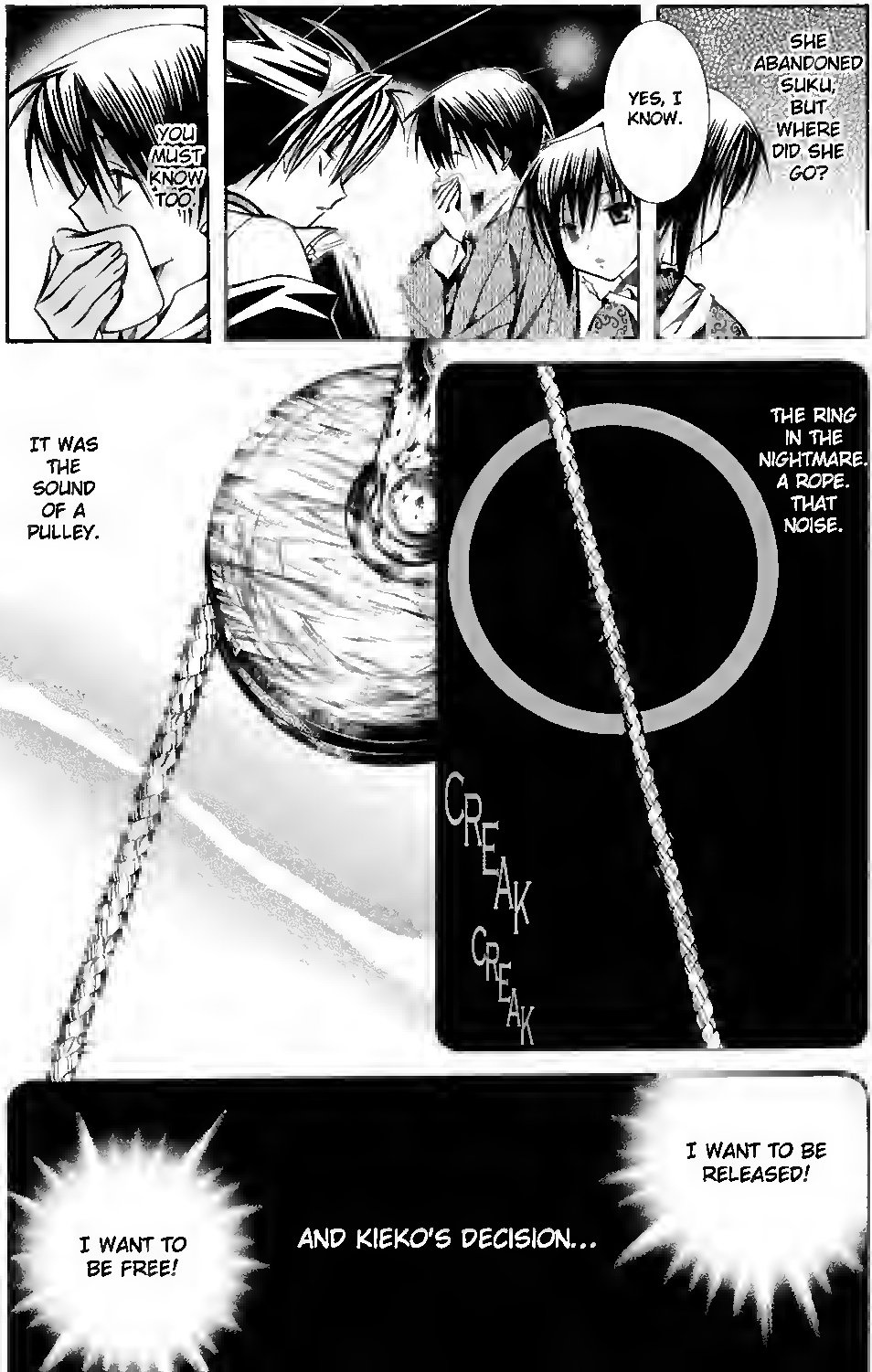
SLASH
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU! YOU!
SLASH
I'M CUTTING YOU OFF NOW!
I WANT TO BE RELEASED!
I WANT TO BE FREE!
KIEKO...
IT'S MY LIFE...

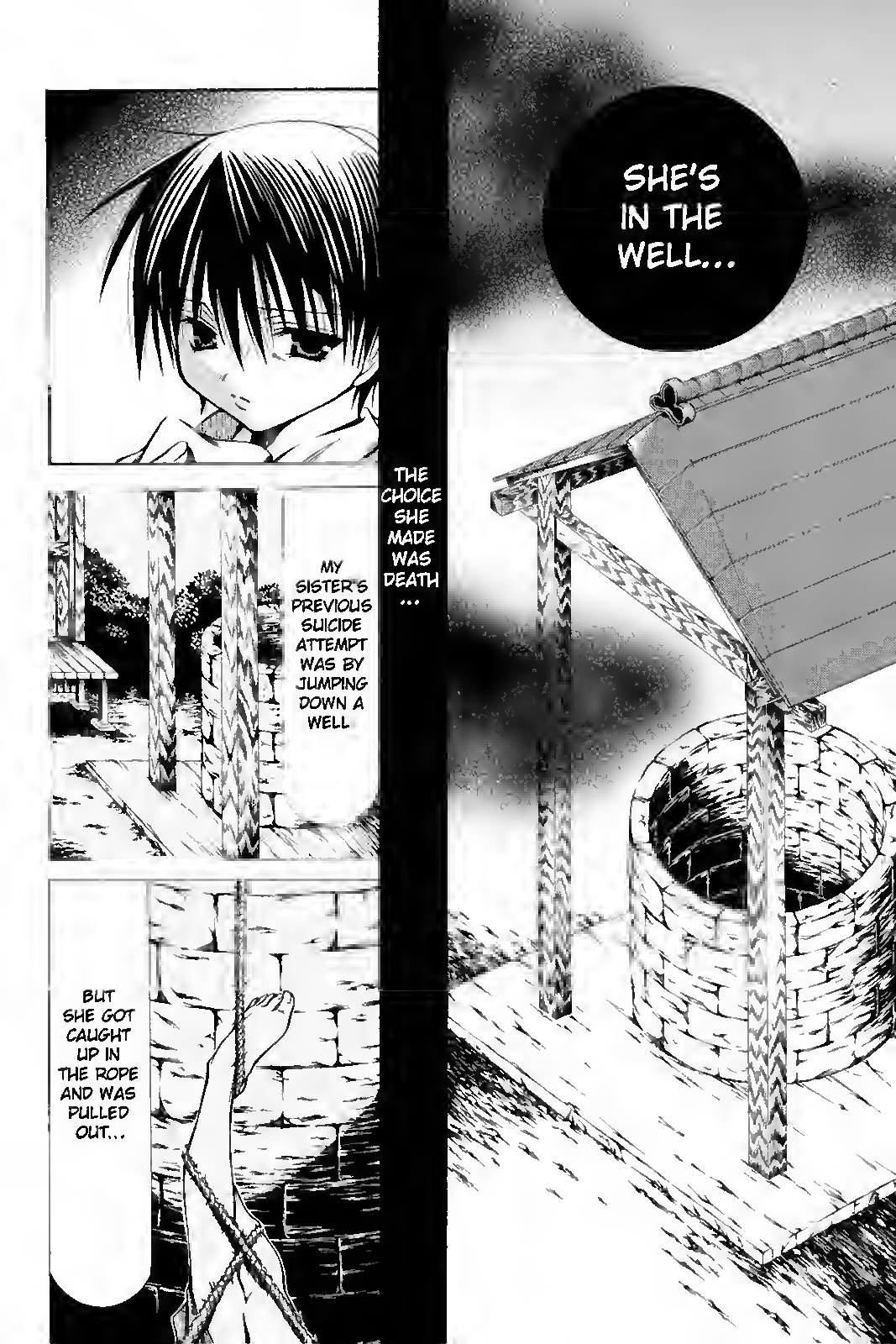
IF THAT IS YOUR DECISION...
TIME TO WAKE UP.

DING
WHATEVER IT IS, SHE'S MADE HER DECISION...
CLATTER
I WONDER HOW KIEKO'S DOING?
A FEW DAYS LATER...
GOOD EVENING. MY NAME IS SUKU KAKU.
I'M KIEKO'S BROTHER..
!
JOOSH

?!
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED MY SISTER TO THINK.
YES...
WHAT?! I THOUGHT SUKU WAS TOO SICK TO EVEN GET OUT OF BED...
BECAUSE... MY SISTER TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE ONCE BEFORE.
MY ILLNESS ISN'T AS BAD AS SHE THINKS... IF I NEED TO, I CAN LEAVE THE HOUSE.
SHE WAS RESCUED JUST IN TIME...
BUT! BUT WHY WOULD YOU PRETEND?!
IT WAS RIGHT AFTER WE LOST OUR PARENTS.
IN HER GRIEF, SHE WASN'T THINKING STRAIGHT.


AFTER THAT, I DECIDED THAT I HAD TO PROTECT MY SISTER.
I PRETENDED THAT MY ILLNESS WAS WORSE THAN IT WAS AND KEPT CALLING FOR HER.
"DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE..."
I THOUGHT THAT IF I SHOWED HER HOW MUCH SHE WAS NEEDED, IT WOULD GIVE HER A REASON TO LIVE.
"STAY WITH ME FOREVER..."
NOT REALIZING THAT YOU HAD BEEN TORMENTING HER...
DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE MIGHT BE...?
A FEW DAYS AGO MY SISTER SAID SHE WAS GOING TO COME HERE. ...AND SHE NEVER RETURNED.

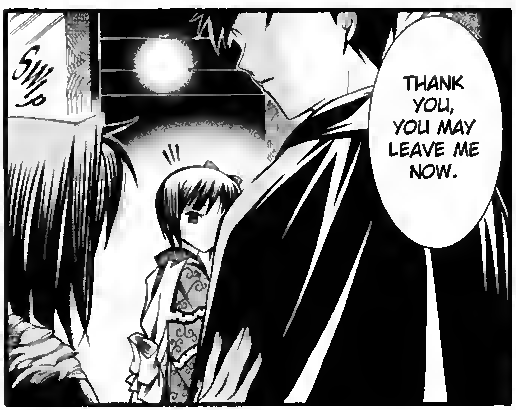

YOU MUST KNOW TOO.
YES, I KNOW.
SHE ABANDONED SUKU, BUT WHERE DID SHE GO?
IT WAS THE SOUND OF A PULLEY.
THE RING IN THE NIGHTMARE. A ROPE. THAT NOISE.
CREAK
CREAK
I WANT TO BE FREE!
AND KIEKO'S DECISION...
I WANT TO BE RELEASED!


SHE'S IN THE WELL...
THE CHOICE SHE MADE WAS DEATH ...
MY SISTER'S PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPT WAS BY JUMPING DOWN A WELL
BUT SHE GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE ROPE AND WAS PULLED OUT...

THAT EXPERIENCE MUST HAVE CROSSED OVER INTO HER NIGHTMARE.
THE CIRCULAR RING WAS THE WELL THAT SHE HAD ONCE FALLEN INTO.
THE ROPE THAT HELD HER BACK WAS THE BIND TO LIFE WITH HER BROTHER.
WHEN SHE AWOKE, SHE DID IT IN REALITY ...
AND DROP TO HER DEATH.
BUT KIEKO CHOSE TO CUT THE ROPE.

HIRUKO ...
WHY DID THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN?
SHE MADE SURE TO CUT THE ROPE BEFORE SHE THREW HERSELF INTO THE WELL.
DO I BLAME MY SISTER FOR ABANDONING ME?
OR MYSELF BECAUSE I PUSHED HER TO IT?
I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER... I JUST KEEP GOING OVER IT IN MY MIND.
IN MY DREAMS I'M WALKING AROUND IN CIRCLES IN THE CORRIDOR ...

The Thirty-Fifth Night: Vision



ARE YOU HIRUKO?
BUT IT'S DANGEROUS AT NIGHT.
I'LL BE FINE. YOU CAN GO HOME.
THIS IS EARL TÔGÔ'S DAUGHTER, MISS RIYU.
I'LL STAY HERE UNTIL MORNING. YOU CAN FETCH ME THEN.
VERY WELL, MISS.
Stop joking around. Go away!
You had better be polite!
WOW! AN EARL'S DAUGHTER! YOU'LL BE REWARDED HANDSOMELY!
PLEASE LOOK AFTER HER..
DING

LATELY I'VE HAD THE FEELING THAT SOMEONE'S ALWAYS WATCHING ME.
THAT'S WHY I STARTED HAVING THIS NIGHTMARE...
I SEE FRAG-MENTS OF MY EVERYDAY LIFE PLAYED OUT.
BUT FROM A DISTANCE, THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE'S EYES.

SO YOU'RE SEEING THE VISION OF THE PERSON WHO'S WATCHING YOU IN YOUR DREAMS.
SO EVEN THOUGH IT'S MY DREAM, IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MINE... IT'S VERY UNNERVING...

SO I WANT YOU TO FIND OUT.
HMM. THERE MAY BE A CLUE IN YOUR DREAM.
LET'S TAKE A LOOK.
FOOSH

YES...
I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHO IT IS, BUT I'M ALSO CURIOUS.

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

OH! THERE ARE SOME NEW SCENES...
EACH NIGHT THERE ARE MORE AND MORE FRAGMENTS.
FLASH

NEXT IS ME LEAVING SCHOOL.
THE FIRST IS OF ME LEAVING THE HOUSE.
INSIDE THE DEPARTMENT STORE...
THEN IT'S ME ON THE TRAM.
I REFUSE TO BE RESTRICTED IN MY COMINGS AND GOINGS.
HE'S THE BODYGUARD HIRED BY MY FATHER.
WHERE IS YOUR CHAUFFEUR?

GASP
I THOUGHT I HAD ELUDED HIM— COULD IT BE MY BODY-GUARD?!
SO I WISH FOR A LITTLE FREEDOM WHILE I'M STILL ABLE...
AS THE DAUGHTER OF AN EARL I WILL HAVE TO LIVE OUT THE LIFE MY FATHER CHOOSES FOR ME.
FLASH
THEN WHO COULD IT BE ...?
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.
NO, BECAUSE HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO WATCH YOU. HE'D JUST TAKE YOU HOME.
PERHAPS MY FRIEND, SUZU?!
!
MAYBE IT'S SOMEONE YOU KNOW?

SHE WORRIES THAT I AM TOO PROTECTED AND HAVE NO UNDERSTANDING OF THE REAL WORLD.
IS SHE FOLLOWING ME WITH ANOTHER GIRL THEN?
OH!
NO, IT CAN'T BE HER. WE'RE ALL HERE.
THE DREAM IS GETTING FILLED UP...!
WHEN ARE THESE SCENES FROM, RIYU?
THE PERSON WHO'S WATCHING YOU CAN'T BE IN THE PICTURE.
HOW WORRISOME IF IT'S SOMEONE I DON'T EVEN KNOW.

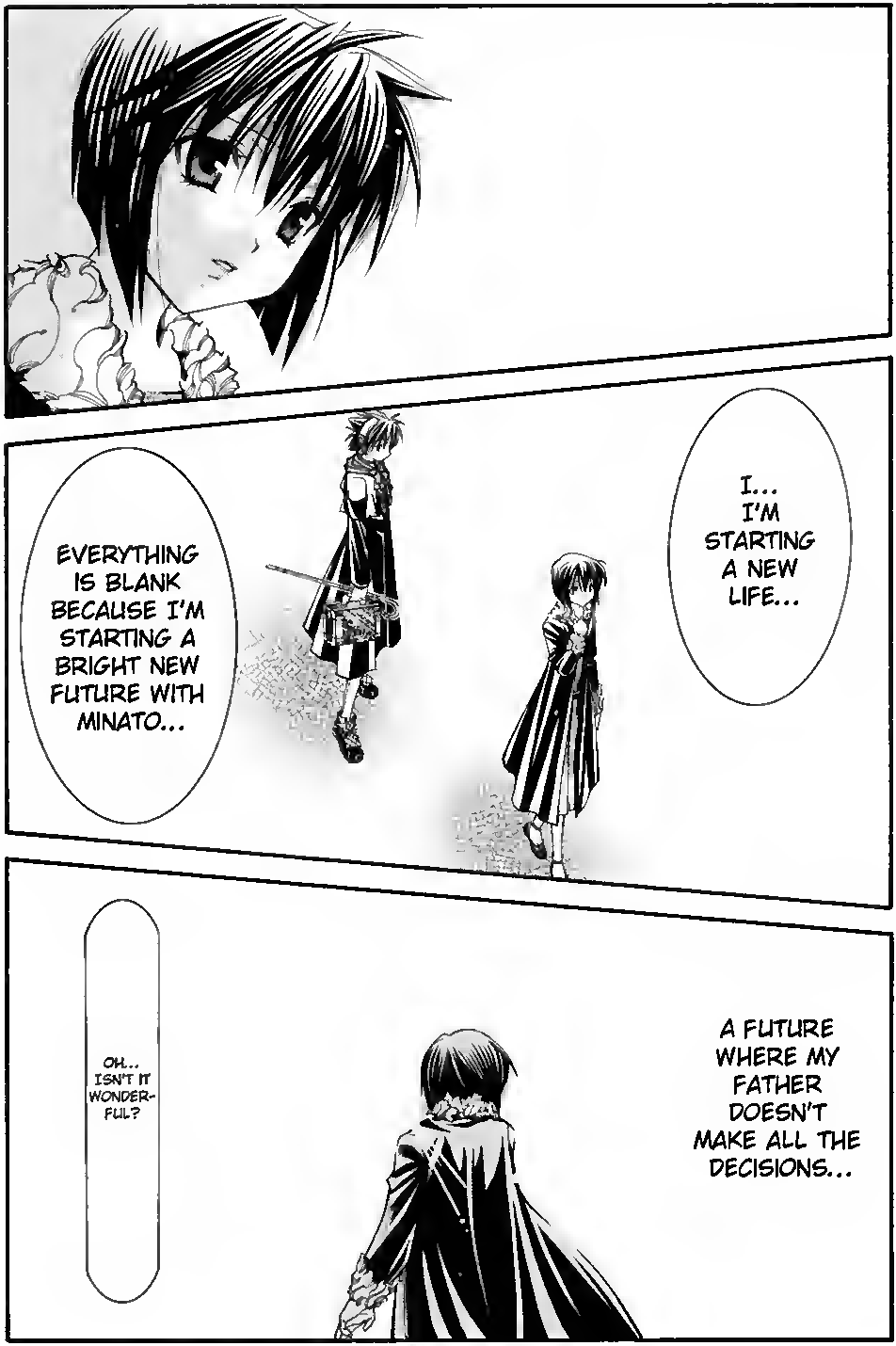
THE FIRST ONE IS FROM THREE DAYS AGO.
THEY SEEM TO BE IN SEQUENTIAL ORDER.
AND THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER TO THE PRESENT.
THAT'S FROM TODAY!
WHEN I PEEKED INTO ONE OF THE BARS IN ASAKUSA ...
Flash
OH!

HEY!
OH! THAT'S MINATO!
MINATO IS REFLECTED IN THE GLASS!
I SEE HIM EVERY MORNING ON MY WAY TO SCHOOL. WE STARTED TO EXCHANGE GREETINGS THREE DAYS AGO.

SO THIS IS ALL THROUGH MINATO'S EYES?
HAS HE ALWAYS BEEN WATCHING ME?
...
HE MAKES MY HEART RACE... I WONDER IF HE FEELS THE SAME WAY ABOUT ME?
THAT WAS JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
I'M ENTERING THE TEA HOUSE..
FLASH
THEN THIS DREAM IS ALMOST OVER.
HE'S GETTING CLOSER.

HUH?
THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS...
FLASH
OH! NOW I'M LEAVING THE TEA HOUSE.
UNTIL NOW THE DREAM HAS BEEN ABOUT YOUR FEAR OF BEING WATCHED AND REPLAYING THE SCENES THAT HAVE HAPPENED...
BUT THIS IS THE FUTURE...
IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE.
OH... SO THEN MINATO...
WHAT DOES HE WANT WITH ME...?

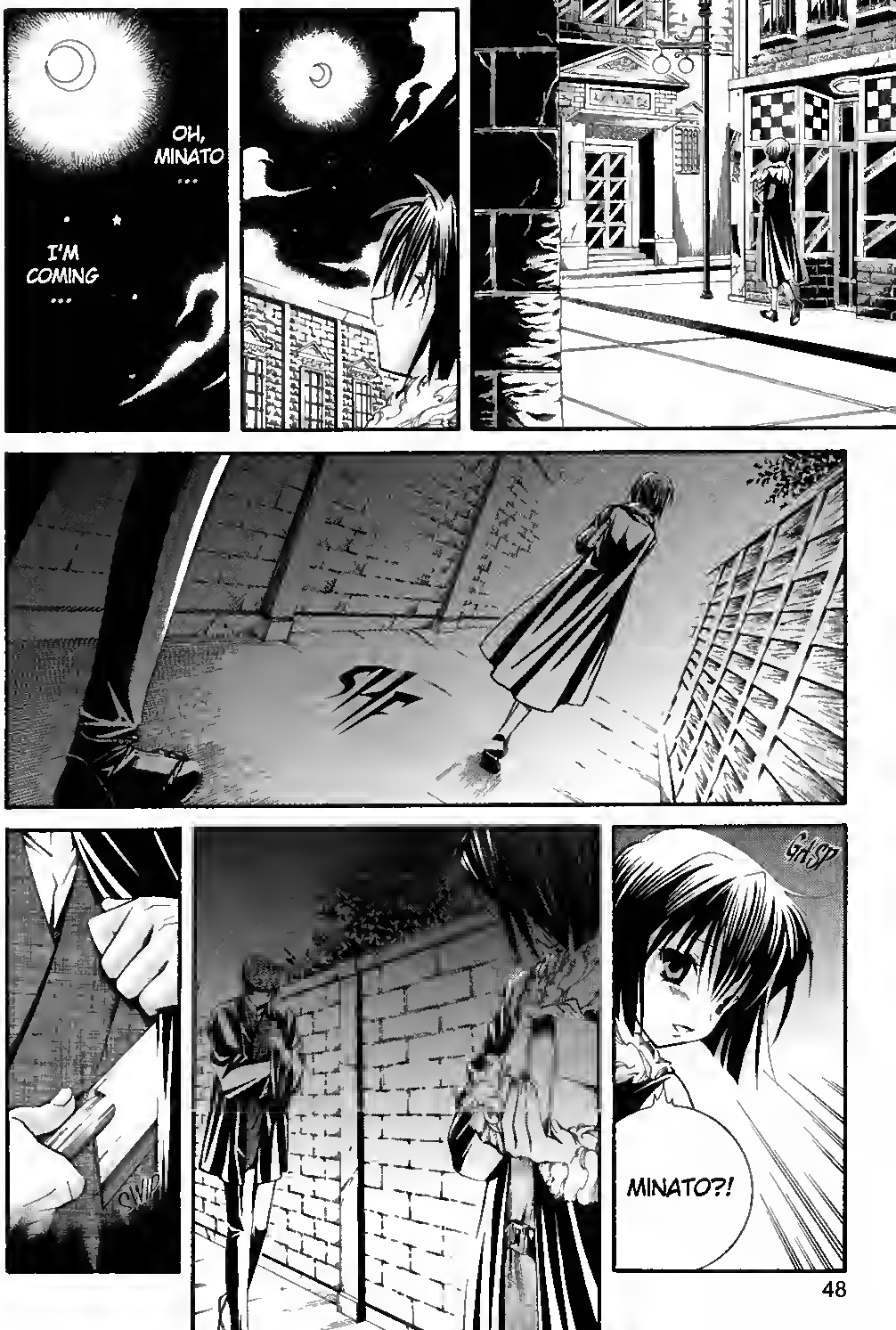
I'LL FIND OUT WHEN THE LAST FRAGMENT APPEARS.
WHEN THIS DREAM ENDS, EVERY-THING WILL BE CLEAR...
BA BUMP
BA BUMP
FLASH


I... I'M STARTING A NEW LIFE...
EVERYTHING IS BLANK BECAUSE I'M STARTING A BRIGHT NEW FUTURE WITH MINATO...
A FUTURE WHERE MY FATHER DOESN'T MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS...
OH... ISN'T IT WONDER-FUL?

HIRUKO!
I WANT TO MAKE THIS DREAM A REALITY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
YES... SOMETIMES YOUR DREAMS CAN PREDICT THE FUTURE.
WELL, I THINK WE'RE DONE HERE.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

YES, I WANT TO GO TO MINATO...
ARE YOU GOING HOME NOW?
喫茶
銀星館
RIYU.
IF YOU LEAVE HERE NOW YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE A FUTURE...
WHY DON'T YOU WAIT FOR YOUR ESCORT?
YOU'RE RIGHT...
...

I'M WILLING TO TURN MY BACK ON THAT. I WANT TO BE WITH MINATO, EVEN IF IT MEANS LOSING EVERYTHING.
BUT IF I OBEY MY FATHER, I'LL HAVE A LIFE WHERE I WILL NOT WANT FOR ANY MONETARY THING.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
MONEY DOESN'T BUY HAPPINESS...
DING

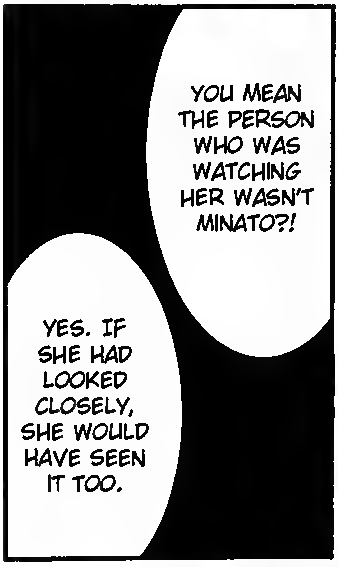

OH, MINATO ...
I'M COMING ...
SHF
SWIP
GASP
MINATO?!

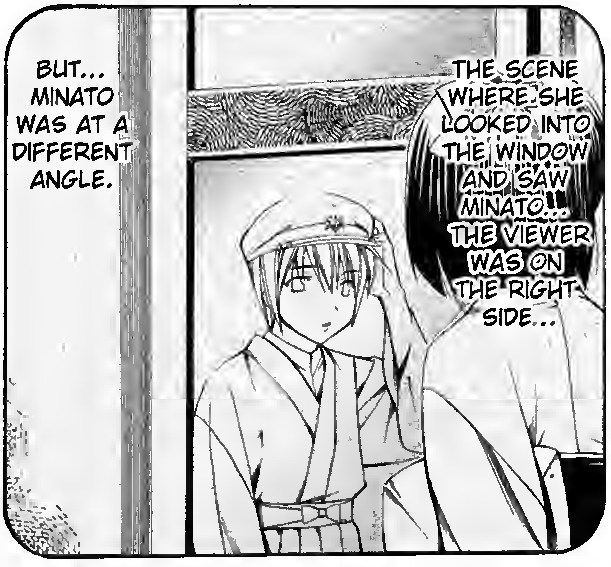
AAAAH!
THUNK

SURELY THE DAUGHTER OF AN EARL CARRIES A GOOD SUM OF MONEY.
THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU ...
IT'S DANGEROUS TO WALK ALONE AT NIGHT.
HEH HEH ...
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY ...

YES.
I WASN'T SURE, BUT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HIRUKO, THAT SCREAM ...!


YOU MEAN THE PERSON WHO WAS WATCHING HER WASN'T MINATO?!
YES. IF SHE HAD LOOKED CLOSELY, SHE WOULD HAVE SEEN IT TOO.


BUT... MINATO WAS AT A DIFFERENT ANGLE.
THE SCENE WHERE SHE LOOKED INTO THE WINDOW AND SAW MINATO!! THE VIEWER WAS ON THE RIGHT SIDE...

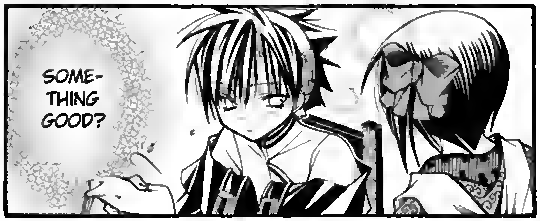
IT WAS *HIS* VISION SHE WAS SEEING.
THERE WAS ANOTHER MAN REFLECTED IN THE WINDOW BEHIND HER...

HER FUTURE IS JUST LIKE HER DREAM— EMPTY AND BLANK...

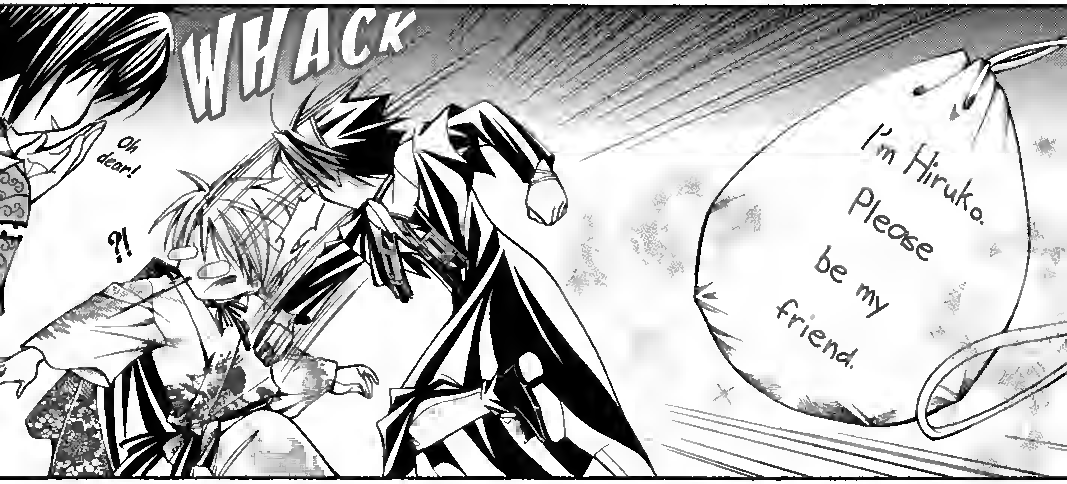
The Thirty-Sixth Night: The Case

...IF YOU CARRY IT, SOMETHING GOOD WILL HAPPEN TO YOU. JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THE BACK.
I'M SORRY IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, BUT...

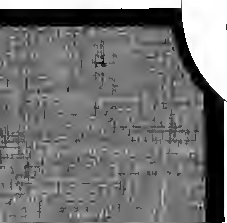
HUH?
HIFUMI, IT'S ALL RIGHT.


SOME-THING GOOD?

I HAVE SOMETHING THAT HIRUKO CAN USE INSTEAD.


WHACK
Oh dear!
?!
I'm Hiruko. Please be my friend.

WHA?
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT. YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.


WE'RE GOING TO WHERE I GOT THE CASE.

UM, I HATE TO SAY THIS... BUT SOME SCARY-LOOKING AURA IS COMING FROM THAT BAG...
I'm Hiruko. Please be my friend
YES, KAIRI GAVE IT TO ME.
THE DELIR-IUM? THEN THAT CASE WAS...
THAT'S WHY I HAD A SPECIAL CASE— TO KEEP IT ALL SEALED UP.
CREAK
DID YOU PUT THE CONTENTS OF YOUR OLD CASE IN THERE? I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN THERE, BUT IT'S CREEPING ME OUT...
I CAN REPLACE THE CASE. BUT...
Tee hee
YES. THIS IDIOT BROKE MY CASE SO I'LL BE NEEDING A NEW ONE...
OH! HIFUMI!
Did Hiruko bring you?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

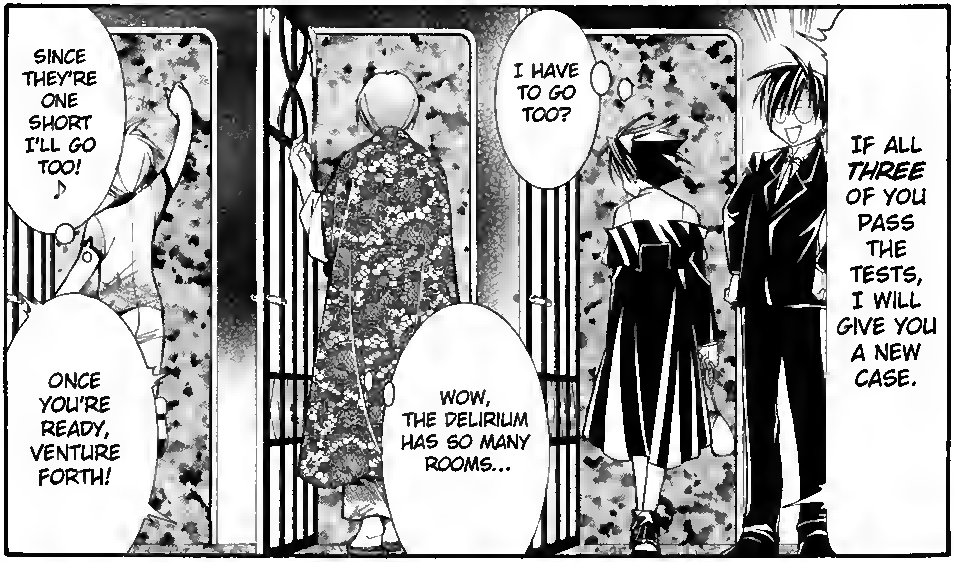
THAT CASE WAS PRICELESS! IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST SHELL OUT MONEY FOR!
IF YOU REALLY WANT IT, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WORK FOR IT.
Are you mad at me?
COME WITH ME.

IT'LL COST YOU.

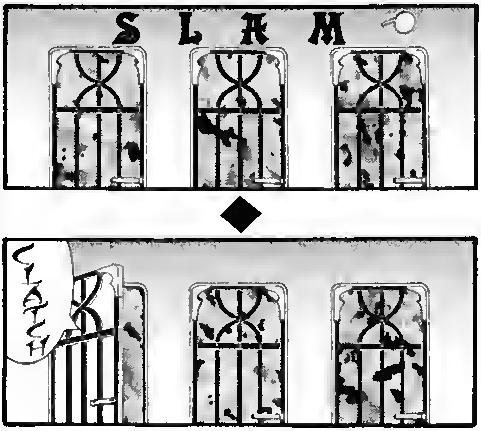
HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU WANT?
This is where you come in.
I THOUGHT SO. THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT HIFUMI.

HMM? THESE DOORS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.
HEH HEH... THAT'S BECAUSE THEY LEAD TO THE "ROOMS OF TRIALS AND CHALLENGES."

EACH ONE CONTAINS A TEST OF YOUR STRENGTH.
THESE DOORS ARE PORTALS TO A REALITY BEYOND YOUR KNOWN PERCEPTIONS AND SENSE OF TIME.


SINCE THEY'RE ONE SHORT I'LL GO TOO! ♪
I HAVE TO GO TOO?
IF ALL THREE OF YOU PASS THE TESTS, I WILL GIVE YOU A NEW CASE.
ONCE YOU'RE READY, VENTURE FORTH!
WOW, THE DELIRIUM HAS SO MANY ROOMS...

I'M BACK...
THAT WAS QUICK. YOU'RE THE FIRST ONE BACK...


SLAM
CLICK

WHO ARE YOU?!
IT'S ME, SHIMA.
YOU SAID I WAS QUICK, BUT FOR ME IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS...
YES, TIME PASSES DIFFERENTLY IN THERE... WHAT WAS YOUR CHALLENGE?
EVERY DAY I TRAVELED IN SEARCH OF EXOTIC NEW FLAVORS...
...TO USE IN COOK-OFF AFTER COOK-OFF.

I WAS THE WORLD'S BEST CHEF!
FINALLY, WHEN I OBTAINED THE ULTIMATE INGREDIENT...
...BUT ONCE I HAD REACHED THE TOP, I JUST FELT EMPTY INSIDE.
WHAT HAD IT ALL BEEN FOR ...?
IT WAS FOR THE CASE.
I'M BACK.
CLATCH
AND THE SECOND ONE OUT IS HIFUMI...

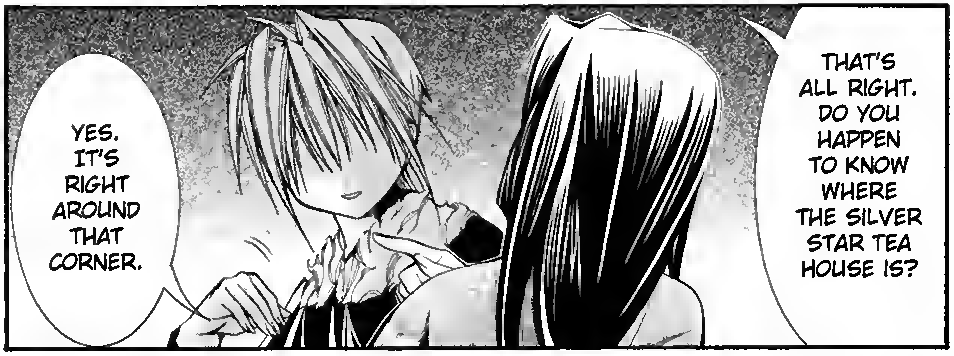
YES... I HAD TO OVERCOME MANY CHALLENGES.
HE'S ... BUFF ...
(SHORT VERSION OF THE STORY.) WRONGLY ACCUSED OF MURDERING MY MASTER, I WAS FORCED TO WANDER THROUGH MANY LANDS...

NOOOO!
IN A FIERCE BATTLE AGAINST MIGHTY WARRIORS, GALVEZ LOST HIS LIFE PROTECTING ME.
GAL... WHO?
Your death will not be in vain
NOT ONLY WAS HE MY RESPECTED RIVAL, BUT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO BELIEVED IN MY INNOCENCE.
WHEN I OVERCAME MY GRIEF, I HAD FINALLY MASTERED ...
THE SECRET SKILL "THE LEGENDARY VICIOUS TIGER"!!
WHAT A WASTE...
ALL FOR THE CASE!

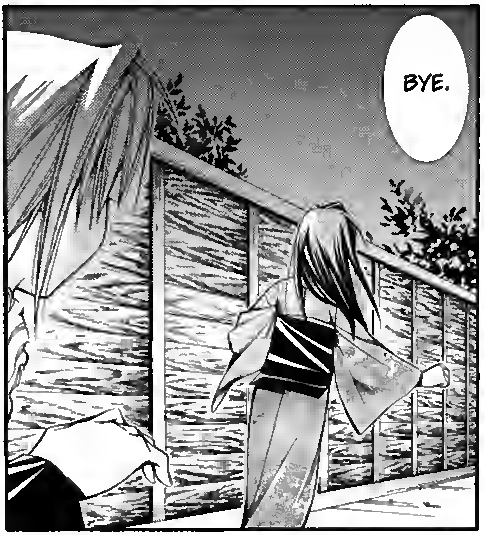
AIN'T THAT RIGHT!
SO THE ONLY ONE LEFT IS HIRU-KO!
CLICK
I CAN FEEL DIVINE AURA EMANATING FROM HIM.
HIRUKOOOOO! WHATEVER YOU HAD TO DO, IT MUST HAVE BEEN AWFUL! HOW YOU MUST HAVE SUFFERED!!
Hiruko Please be my friend
KAIRI, WE'VE PROVED OURSELVES... GIVE HIM THE CASE!
I don't even want to know!

HEE HEE. HAVEN'T YOU REALIZED YET?
WHAT?!
I CAN'T DO THAT.
LOOK, IT'S IN YOUR HEARTS ...
YOU'VE ALREADY EARNED IT IN YOUR PERILOUS TRAVELS— PERSEVERANCE, FRIENDSHIP AND STRONG WILL. THESE ARE THE "CASE" THAT YOU'VE ATTAINED.
KILL HIM.
THE LEGENDARY VICIOUS INCEST!!

SHIMA, STOP! DON'T COOK ME!
SSC
SSC
NO! HIRUKO'S GOING TO EAT ME!
UHM UHM
HE'S HAVING SOME IDIOTIC FANTASY AGAIN...
C'MON, LET'S JUST GET A CASE AND GO! I'M ABOUT TO LOSE MY MIND IF I STAY HERE MUCH LONGER!
Oh, all right. I'LL GO GET IT.
I DECORATED IT FOR YOU. ISN'T IT CUTE?
I- I DON'T WANT IT!
Why'd you go do that?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE POLITE.
I DON'T WANT IT!
I'm going crazy!
Hiruko, please stop vomiting blood... I may not be as delicious as a nightmare, but you're hurting my pride...



The Thirty-Seventh Night: The Doll



HMM, SO THIS IS HIRUKO ...
AS RUMOR CLUB MEMBERS WE THOUGHT WE SHOULD COME VISIT THE MYSTERIOUS BAKU...
WHAT A LET DOWN. I WAS HOPING FOR A MON-STER.
...BUT HE IS A LITTLE CREEPY.
...
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? HE LOOKS LIKE JUST A KID.
LOOK AT HIS SKIN... IT'S SO PALE— LIKE HE HAS NO BLOOD.
YES... LIKE A CORPSE...
IF WE TOUCH HIM WE MIGHT BE PLAGUED BY SOME TERRIBLE OMEN.
IT'S BECAUSE HE ONLY EATS NIGHTMARES, THAT'S WHY...
HIRUKO, SINCE THERE AREN'T ANY CUSTOMERS WHY DON'T YOU RETIRE UPSTAIRS?
THEY DON'T BOTHER ME.

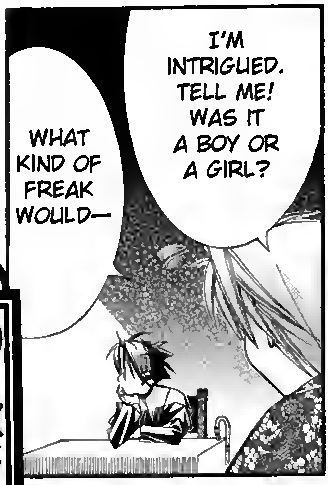
SPEAKING OF NIGHT-MARES...
MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN THE CITY ARE HAVING BAD DREAMS.
HEY HIRUKO, YOU CAN ENTER PEOPLE'S DREAMS BUT YOU DON'T MESS WITH THEM, RIGHT? YOU WOULDN'T DRIVE THE DREAMER INTO SUCH DESPAIR THAT THEY'D DIE...
HA HA, RIGHT?
DREAMS SO BAD THAT PEOPLE ARE FALLING INTO DEEP DESPAIR.
...I COULD...
SOME ARE EVEN DYING...!
?!
UH, N-NONE OF US ARE HAVING ANY BAD DREAMS...!

HOW CAN YOU STAND BEING AROUND THAT CREEPY GUY?
PSST
PSST
WHY DON'T WE LEAVE NOW.
YES. LET'S LEAVE HIRUKO TO HIS CUSTOMERS!
HEY, HIFUMI.
WELL, SEE YOU.
HA HA HA HA.
JUST BE CAREFUL, OKAY?
HE MIGHT BE THE ONE BEHIND ALL THE RUMORS.
DING
HIRUKO WOULDN'T DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WHO ARE YOU TO SAY SUCH A THING!
BUT THEN I DIDN'T EXPECT MUCH FROM YOUR FRIENDS...
WHAT A NOISY BUNCH.

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS!
YOU'RE JUST A MEAN, GLOOMY LAZY-BONES.

GASP
THAT'S WHY PEOPLE SUSPECT THE WORST OF YOU...

YOU MEAN THERE'S SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE YOUR FRIEND?!
DO YOU ACTUALLY HAVE A FRIEND?!
WH-WHY ARE YOU SMILING ...?


I'M INTRIGUED. TELL ME! WAS IT A BOY OR A GIRL?
WHAT KIND OF FREAK WOULD—

BUT I ONCE MET SOMEONE WHOM I FELT A CONNECTION WITH...

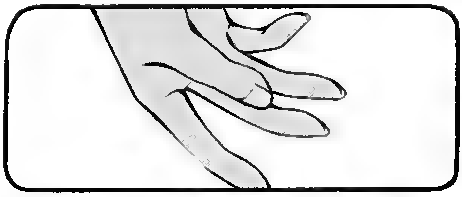
...NOT A FRIEND. IT'S NOT LIKE WE SPENT TIME TOGETHER.

I'M... SUZU ARAYA-SHIKI.
IS HIRUKO HERE...?
Perm
HE'S IN THE BACK. PLEASE SIT DOWN AND I'LL MAKE YOU SOME COFFEE.
...BUT WE'VE HAD A LOT MORE CUSTOMERS LATELY.
I WONDER IF IT'S BECAUSE OF THE RUMOR...
SORRY, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY APPETITE...
IT'S AS IF I DON'T NEED TO EAT ANYMORE...
YOU DON'T NEED TO EAT?
NO... I CAN BARELY EVEN MOVE ...

A SCAR ...
THEN LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YOUR NIGHT-MARE.
FOOSH
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND

SUZU... HALF OF YOUR FACE IS...

NO! IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN...
CLACK
SWOOSH
IT'S HER ARMS AND LEGS TOO.
NO, IT'S NOT JUST HER FACE.
HER HAND SWITCHED WITH THE DOLL'S HAND.
THAT SCAR WILL GROW UNTIL IT COVERS YOUR ENTIRE BODY. YOU'LL LOOK SO UGLY...
HURRY AND SWAP IT...
COME...
SUZU, WHAT IS WITH THE DOLL?
AND A VOICE FROM SOME-WHERE SAID...
IT APPEARED ONE NIGHT IN MY DREAM.



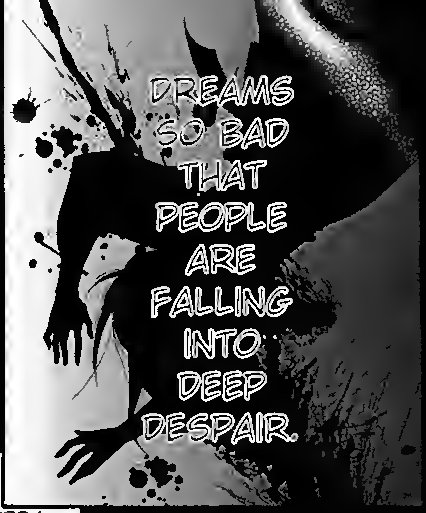
HER SKIN IS SO FLAWLESS.
I WISH I COULD BE LIKE HER...
JUST LIKE THE VOICE SAID, IT DOESN'T STOP...
NOW EVERY NIGHT, PART OF MY BODY CHANGES WITH THE DOLL'S.

ARE YOU SO UPSET ABOUT THE SCAR THAT IT CAUSES YOU TO HEAR VOICES?
I'VE HAD NIGHT-MARES ABOUT MY SCAR GETTING BIGGER SINCE I WAS YOUNGER. I WAS ALWAYS BEING TEASED ABOUT IT...

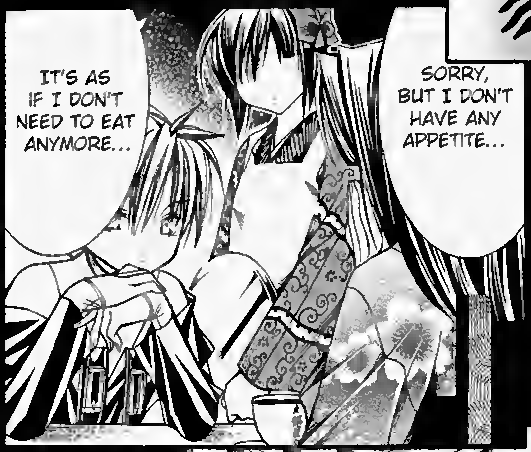
THEN THIS DOLL APPEARED...

SWOOSH
A STIFF, MOTIONLESS BODY IS USELESS!
B-BUT I HATE IT!
YOU HATED YOUR SCAR SO MUCH THAT YOU WERE ENTRANCED BY THE DOLL.
IT'S GETTING SO I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS THE DOLL AND WHICH IS ME!
WHICH AM I?! I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING ...!
I-I'M SCARED. HELP ME!
HOLD ME TIGHT SO I CAN FEEL WHICH ONE IS ME!

NGH…
UGH…
SOME-THING'S ODD HERE.
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN… WHY DOES SHE TORTURE HERSELF FURTHER WITH A DOLL?
IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SIMPLISTIC DREAM. IT'S TOO EASY…
BUT…



BELIEVING THAT SHE DIDN'T NEED TO EAT BECAUSE SHE WAS A DOLL...



CERTAINLY SHE COULD HAVE BEEN IN DANGER OF STARVATION...

I'VE HAD A LOT OF CUSTOMERS LIKE THIS RECENTLY.

CLATTER

THE NIGHTMARES HAVE CHANGED...

I... I CAN'T MOVE.
I'M NOW A DOLL.
I CAN'T TALK OR EAT ANYMORE... ALL I CAN DO IS GATHER DUST UNTIL I ROT AWAY...
THUD
FLICK
N-NO!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SLAM

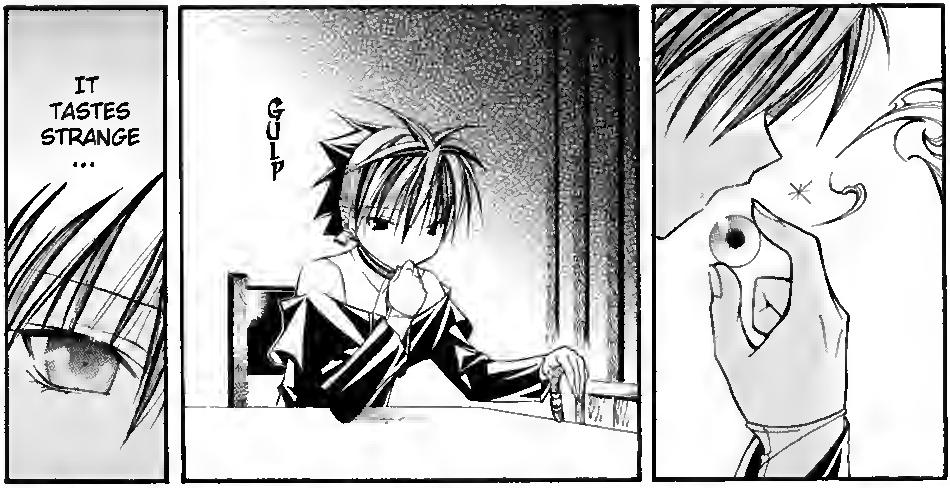
AAAAHH!!

THIS IS YOU.
BUT THE DOLL DOESN'T EXIST ANY-MORE.
IT WAS YOUR DESIRE TO BE THE DOLL IN THE FIRST PLACE THAT TRAPPED YOU INTO THINKING YOU WERE THE DOLL.
SINCE YOU AND THE DOLL COMPLETELY SWITCHED WITH EACH OTHER, THIS DOLL BECAME HOW YOU WERE BEFORE— INSIDE AND OUT.
... I CAN FEEL YOU ...

LET GO.
YOU'RE COLD.
I'M WARMER THAN YOU.
BECAUSE THIS IS MY BODY.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

IT WAS SUCH A FOOLISH DREAM.
IT HURT MORE NOT BEING MYSELF.
IT'S BETTER TO HAVE A SCAR OR TWO THAN TO BE A LIFELESS DOLL...
SUZU.
IT IS YOU.
THAT SCAR IS A PART OF YOU.
...
WHEN A PERSON'S INSECURITIES ARE ATTACKED, THEY TEND TO CRUMBLE, LIKE YOU DID. BE CAREFUL.
YOU'RE RIGHT... THANK YOU.

HE'S RIGHT.
I THINK I'LL BE OKAY NOW.
THE SCAR IS A PART OF ME ...?
THAT'S ALL RIGHT. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE IS?
YES. IT'S RIGHT AROUND THAT CORNER.
OH, I'M SORRY.
THAT GIRL... IS SHE ...?
BYE.



I CAN TASTE THE PAIN IT CAUSED SUZU...

BUT...

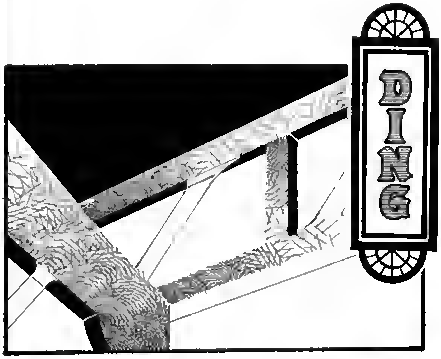
EVEN THOUGH IT'S DELICIOUS, THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE...

SOMETHING IMPURE MIXED IN...

THE DOLL AND THE VOICE IN THE DREAM...

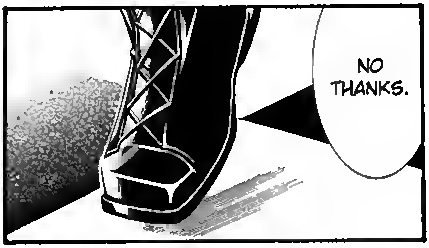
WERE THEY REALLY HER OWN INVEN-TIONS ...?

I ONLY CAME TO SEE THE BAKU THAT LIVES HERE.


DING

ANOTHER CUSTOMER?

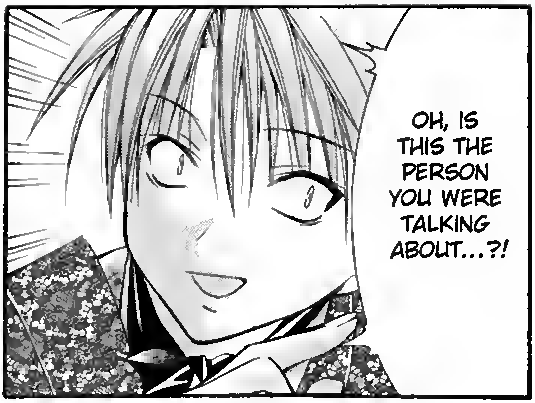
PLEASE, COME IN' I'LL MAKE SOME COFFEE


NO THANKS.

TSUKI
...
SHIRO
...

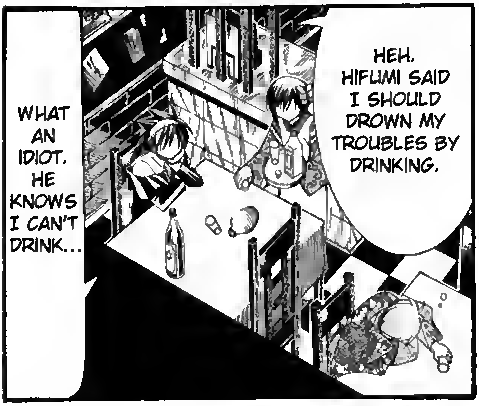
TSUKI-SHIRO?

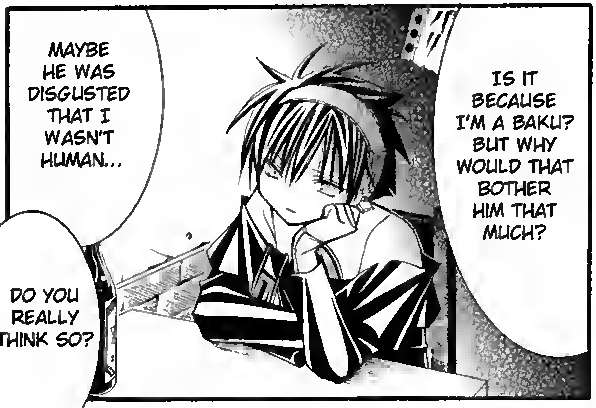
REALLY, HIRUKO?
THIS IS WONDER-FUL! IT MUST BE QUITE A WHILE SINCE YOU'VE LAST SEEN EACH OTHER...
HMPH!

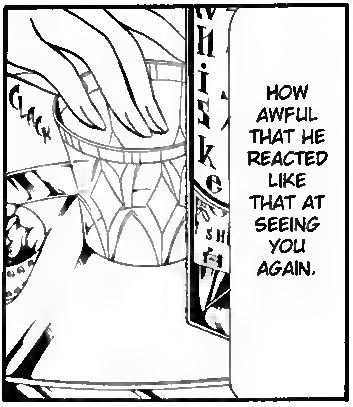

OH, IS THIS THE PERSON YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT...?!

YOU'RE THE BAKU?!
SLAM

The Thirty-Eighth Night: Desires




MAYBE HE WAS DISGUSTED THAT I WASN'T HUMAN...
DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?
IS IT BECAUSE I'M A BAKU? BUT WHY WOULD THAT BOTHER HIM THAT MUCH?



WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT HIM.
HE BEFRIENDED SOMEONE AS GUARDED AS YOU. I DON'T THINK HE'D BE BOTHERED BY THAT.
I MET HIM TWO YEARS AGO...
I'D ONLY JUST BECOME A BAKU.
...RIGHT BEFORE YOU CAME TO THE SILVER STAR.
OH...

IT WAS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. THE CITY LAY IN RUINS ALL AROUND...

SO I REALLY CAN'T DIE...
STAB
I'VE GIVEN UP ON BEING HUMAN...
I REALLY AM A BAKU.
ARE YOU DYING?
SHF
BECAUSE I DON'T NEED IT ANYMORE...

CAN YOU TAKE ME WITH YOU?
IN MY DREAMS MY MOM AND DAD KEEP CALLING FOR ME.
THEY BURNED TO DEATH IN THE QUAKE...
I DON'T WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE...
ROLL
THE SUN... IT HURTS.
I THREW AWAY DEATH TOO.
HEY...
HEY...
NGH!
Agh!
ROLL

Agh...
WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
BECAUSE YOU'RE AFRAID OF DYING?
ARE YOU AFRAID OF NO LONGER EXISTING?

THEN BE HAPPY WITH THAT.
YOU STILL HAVE NEED OF YOURSELF.
COUGH
COUGH
YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR.
...

I COULD STRANGLE YOU TOO, IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT FOR SURE.
...
WANT TO GIVE UP ON YOURSELF TOO?
...ARE YOU HAPPY?
I KNOW YOUR ANSWER.
!
HEH
IF THERE WEREN'T ANY OPTIONS, LIFE WOULD JUST GO ON FOREVER, YOU KNOW?
YOU COULDN'T REALLY SAY YOU WERE "LIVING" ANYMORE.
HE WAS THE SAME AS ME.
WE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT OURSELVES...
EVEN IF SHE HAD CHOSEN DEATH THAT'S JUST ONE PATH RIGHT?

SO, REALLY, YOU CAN'T REGRET GIVING EVERYTHING UP.
BUT IF YOU DON'T NEED YOUR LIFE, YOU DON'T NEED ANY OPTIONS.
HA HA... YOU SURE DO HAVE A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.
ME, I LIKE TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT. DO WHAT I WANT, WHEN I WANT.
WANTS... FOR ME, THAT WOULD BE NIGHT-MARES.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HMM, LET ME SEE...
HEY.

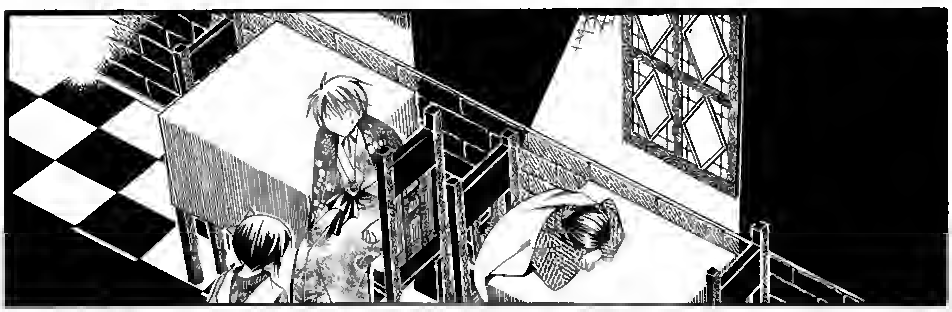
I DON'T KNOW IF I NEED MYSELF.
BUT...
IF SOMEONE NEEDED ME... THEN I'D HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR.
SO I'M GOING TO FIND THAT PERSON...
I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING!
RIGHT NOW, WHAT I WANT... IS YOU!
!
YOU'LL LIVE FOR ME AND I'LL DO WHAT I CAN FOR YOU.

REALLY?!
OKAY?
IF YOU STAY WITH ME, I PROMISE I WON'T THINK ABOUT DYING AGAIN, MISTER!
HE REALLY DOES LIVE IN THE MOMENT!
FUU
THAT'S NOT A TRUE DESIRE.
WE'RE GOING TO BE GOOD FRIENDS...
CALL ME TSUKISHIRO.

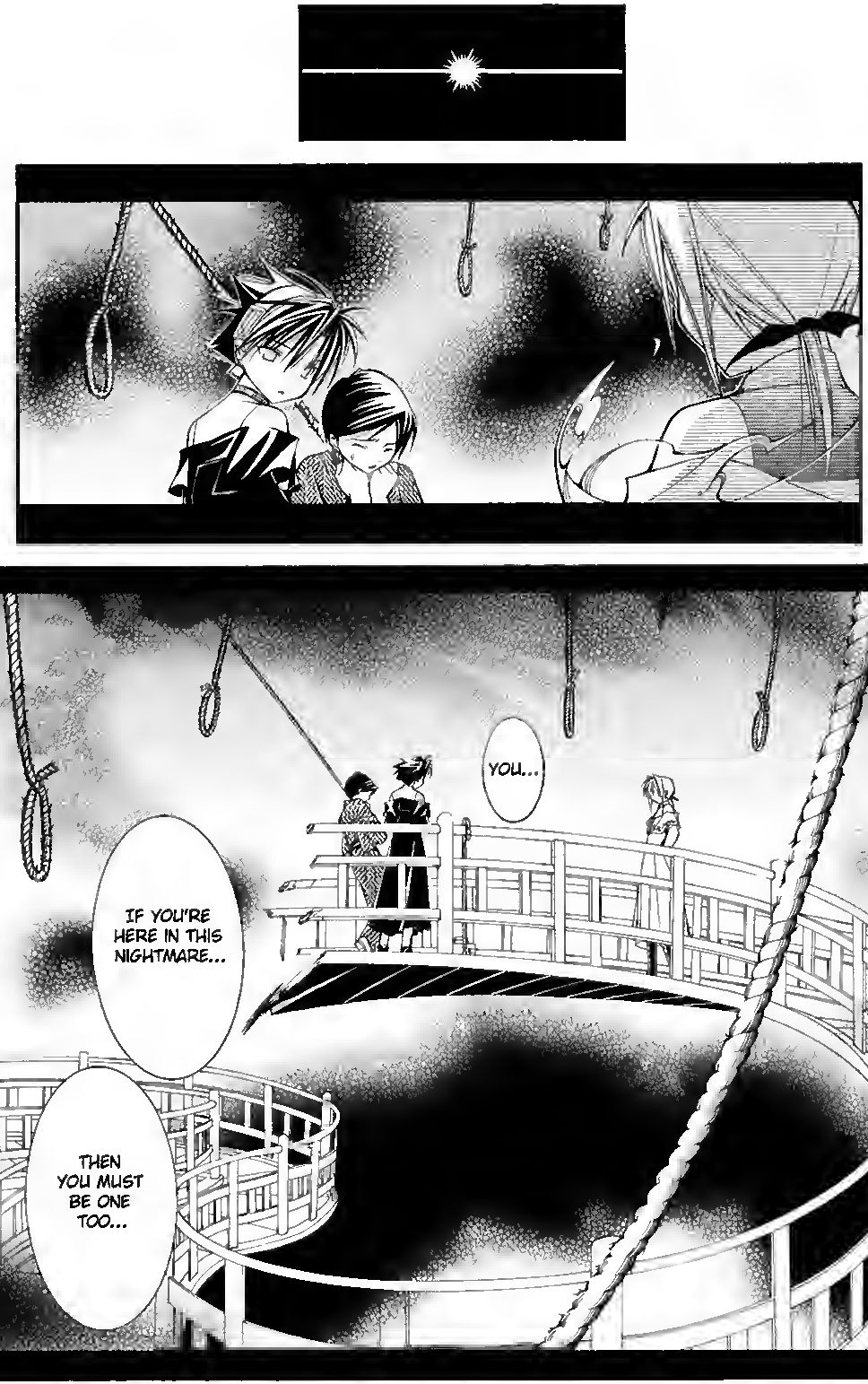
YAWN... I FELL ASLEEP.
JUST LIKE THE RUMORS.
SEEMS HE KEEPS DREAMING ABOUT HIS OWN SUICIDE.
HE'S WITH A CUSTOMER... IN A DREAM.
WHERE'S HIRUKO?
BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE SORT OF PERSON TO REJECT HIRUKO BECAUSE HE'S A BAKU.
I ASKED HIM ABOUT TSUKISHIRO.
YEP, SHE'S DOING VERY WELL.
HE LOOKED AFTER THAT ORPHANED GIRL EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T HAVE TO...

SOMETIMES I EVEN FEED HER
WHEN DID HE—?!
TSUKI-SHIRO?!
THAT ORPHAN, THE GIRL LAST NIGHT, AND NOW THIS ONE...
THEY WERE *MINE* FIRST.
?

YOU SHOULDN'T INTERFERE, HIRUKO.
THAT CANE...
YOU CAN'T BE...!
I'LL DRAG YOU OUT.

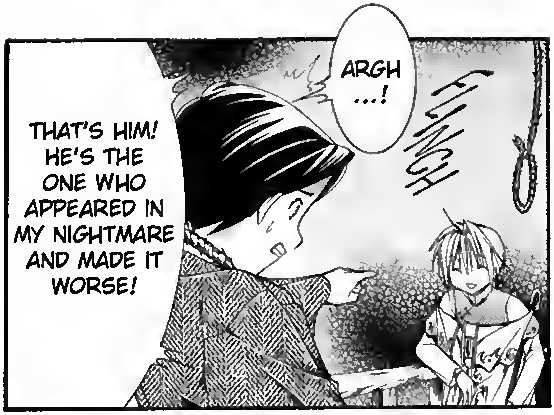


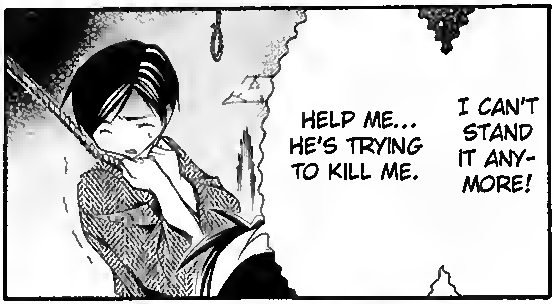
HE'S ONE TOO...

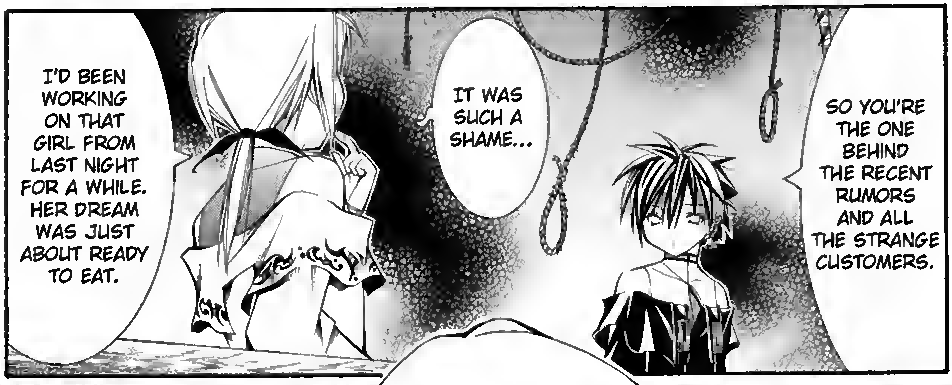

YOU...
IF YOU'RE HERE IN THIS NIGHTMARE...
THEN YOU MUST BE ONE TOO...

IRONIC, ISN'T IT? WELL NO WONDER WE RELATED SO MUCH TO EACH OTHER WHEN WE MET!
Hee
Hee
Hee
SINCE YOU ARE...
YES, I'M THE SAME AS YOU.
I'M TSUKISHIRO, THE BAKU.

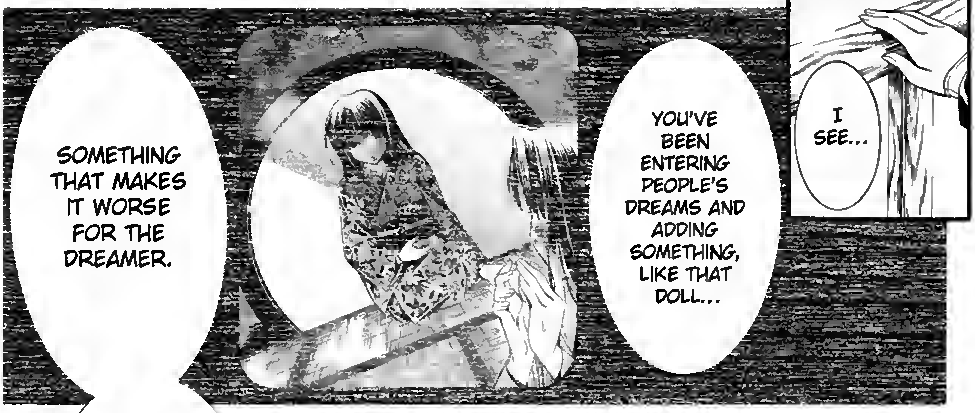
HEY, DON'T YOU GO DOING SOMETHING STUPID. 'CAUSE YOU'RE MINE. MY PREY...
PREY ...


ARGH ...!
THAT'S HIM! HE'S THE ONE WHO APPEARED IN MY NIGHTMARE AND MADE IT WORSE!

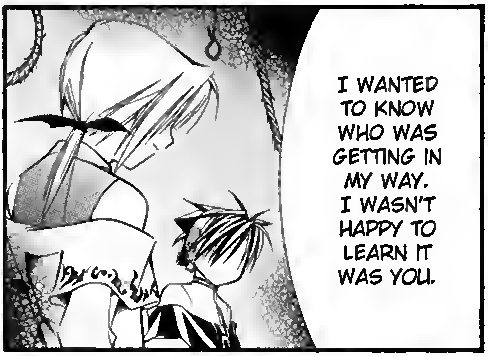

I CAN'T STAND IT ANY-MORE!
HELP ME... HE'S TRYING TO KILL ME.

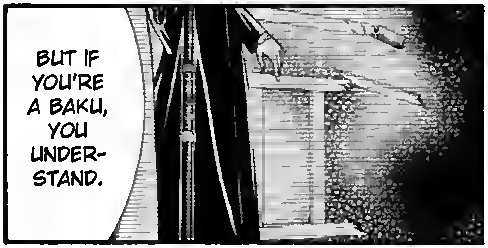

I'D BEEN WORKING ON THAT GIRL FROM LAST NIGHT FOR A WHILE. HER DREAM WAS JUST ABOUT READY TO EAT.
IT WAS SUCH A SHAME...
SO YOU'RE THE ONE BEHIND THE RECENT RUMORS AND ALL THE STRANGE CUSTOMERS.

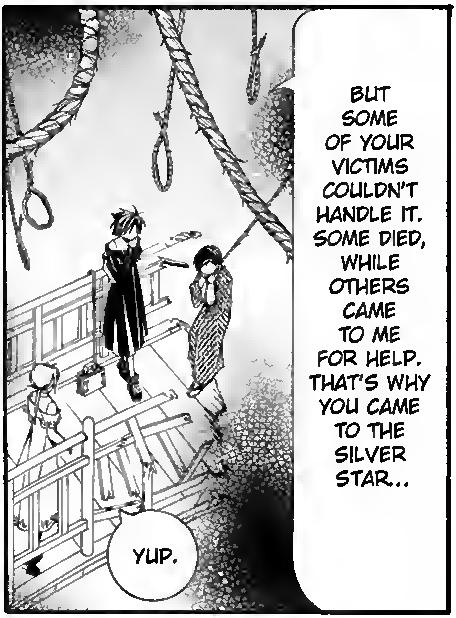
HUMANS CRUMBLE SO EASILY WHEN YOU ATTACK THEIR WEAKNESSES.
HEH HEH. AND IT ONLY TOOK A SIMPLE DOLL.

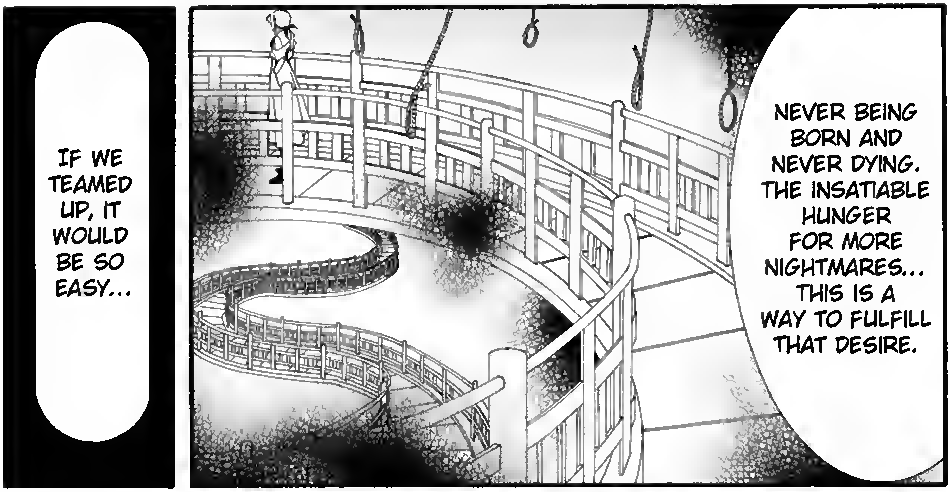

I SEE...
YOU'VE BEEN ENTERING PEOPLE'S DREAMS AND ADDING SOMETHING, LIKE THAT DOLL...
SOMETHING THAT MAKES IT WORSE FOR THE DREAMER.

AND IN TURN, CREATING A MORE VIOLENT AND DELICIOUS DREAM.
JUST LIKE AZUSA...

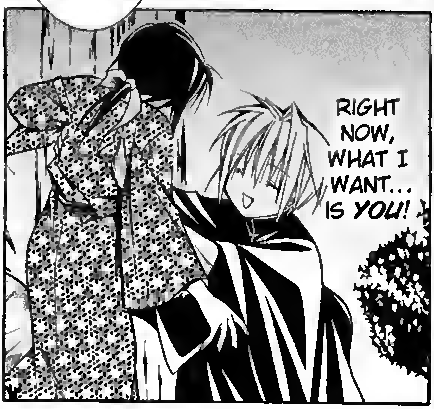

I WANTED TO KNOW WHO WAS GETTING IN MY WAY. I WASN'T HAPPY TO LEARN IT WAS YOU.


BUT IF YOU'RE A BAKU, YOU UNDER-STAND.

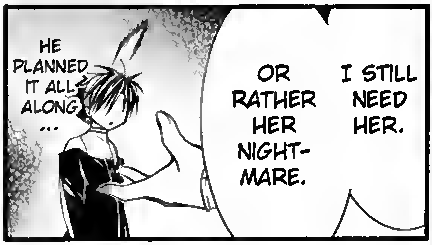

BUT SOME OF YOUR VICTIMS COULDN'T HANDLE IT. SOME DIED, WHILE OTHERS CAME TO ME FOR HELP. THAT'S WHY YOU CAME TO THE SILVER STAR...
YUP.


IF WE TEAMED UP, IT WOULD BE SO EASY...
NEVER BEING BORN AND NEVER DYING. THE INSATIABLE HUNGER FOR MORE NIGHTMARES... THIS IS A WAY TO FULFILL THAT DESIRE.

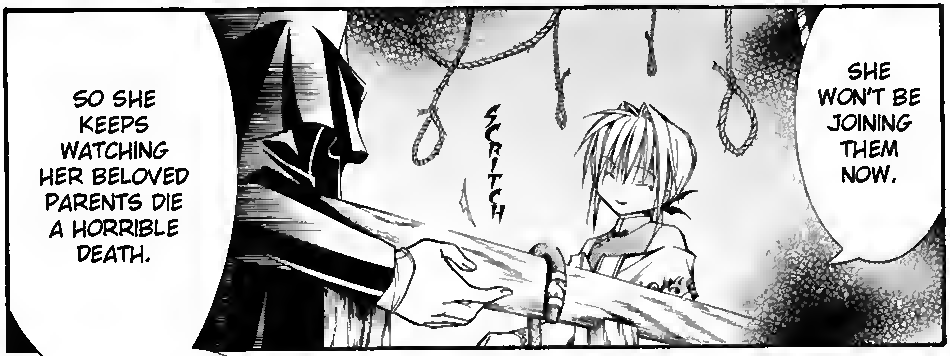
WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT GIRL YOU TOOK IN TWO YEARS AGO?


RIGHT NOW, WHAT I WANT... IS *YOU*!

WE COULD CREATE A FOREST WITH ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD...
A FOREST FULL OF NIGHTMARES.


HE PLANNED IT ALL ALONG ...
OR RATHER HER NIGHT-MARE.
I STILL NEED HER.

SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO JOIN HER DEAD PARENTS.
I JUST ADDED SOME SPARK TO HER DREAM SO SHE COULD RELIVE HER PARENTS DYING ALL OVER AGAIN.


SHE WON'T BE JOINING THEM NOW.
SCRITCH
SO SHE KEEPS WATCHING HER BELOVED PARENTS DIE A HORRIBLE DEATH.

IF SOMEONE NEEDED ME... THEN I'D HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR.
AND SINCE SHE WANTS YOU TO NEED HER, SHE'S TOLERATED TWO YEARS OF THIS TORMENT...

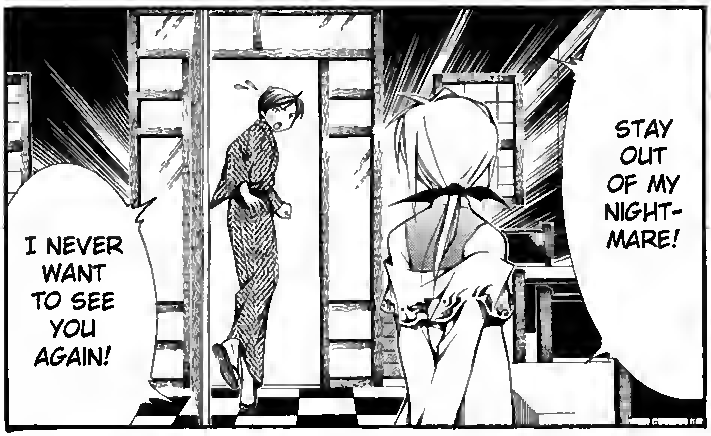
NO...
HEE HEE...
HA HA...
SHE'S ALREADY BROKEN.
HEE HEE HEE...

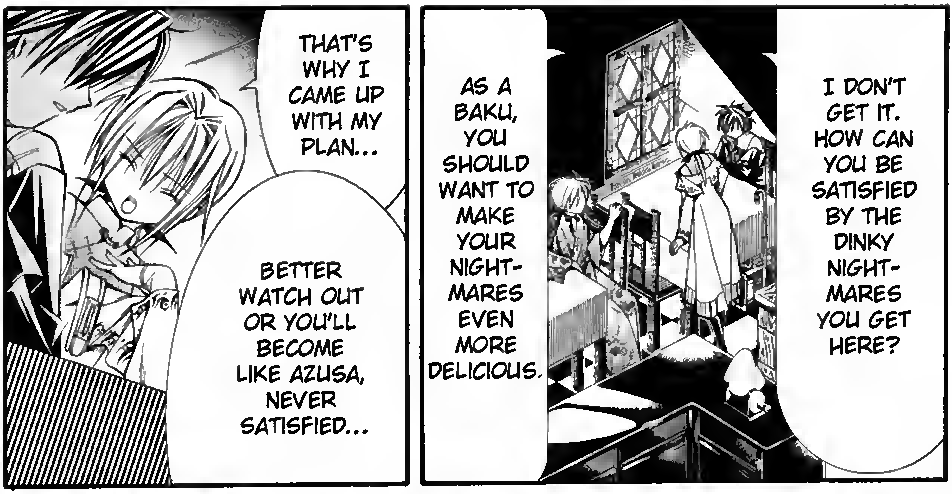
I WOULD NEVER TOY WITH THE DREAMER.
ANYWAYS, BACK TO WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT...
No kid could take that.
SHE'S VERY RIPE, SO I SHOULD EAT HER BEFORE SHE ROTS.

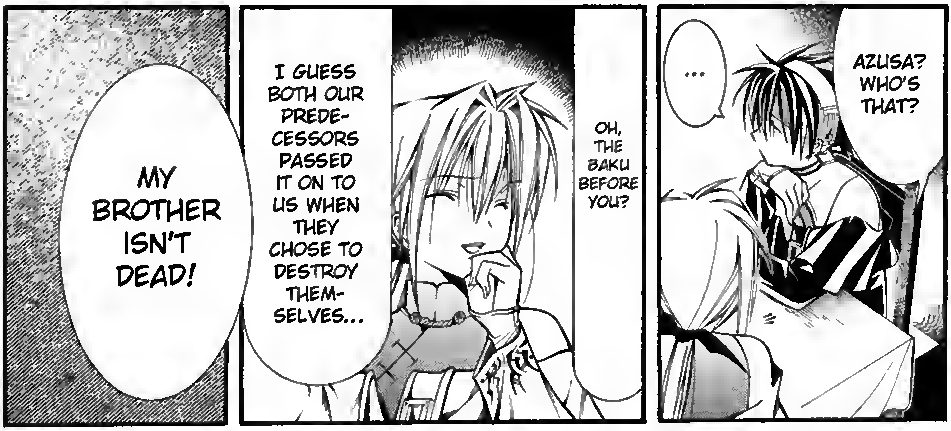
WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, I RESPECT THE CUSTOMER'S WISHES AND FULFILL THEIR DESIRES. THAT'S ALL.
AND I WON'T GET IN YOUR WAY EITHER.
HE WAS YOUR CUSTOMER FIRST... SO GO AHEAD AND WATCH HIM HANG HIMSELF.
?!
ARE YOU KIDDING?! IF YOU DON'T HELP ME I'LL...
TSUKISHIRO'S NOT TRYING TO KILL YOU. YOU'VE FALLEN INTO HIS TRAP.
BUT IT'S STILL YOUR DREAM. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND YOU CAN GET OUT OF IT.
HIRUKO ...

YOU'RE SO... ODD.
WE'RE BAKU. FULFILLING OUR DESIRES IS NATURAL.
HOW CAN YOU BE SATISFIED WITH THIS?
LET'S LET THIS GUY GO AND THEN WE CAN DISCUSS THIS...
TIME TO WAKE UP.

The Thirty-Ninth Night: The Method




I DON'T GET IT. HOW CAN YOU BE SATISFIED BY THE DINKY NIGHT-MARES YOU GET HERE?
AS A BAKU, YOU SHOULD WANT TO MAKE YOUR NIGHT-MARES EVEN MORE DELICIOUS.
THAT'S WHY I CAME UP WITH MY PLAN...
BETTER WATCH OUT OR YOU'LL BECOME LIKE AZUSA, NEVER SATISFIED...


AZUSA? WHO'S THAT?
...
OH, THE BAKU BEFORE YOU?
I GUESS BOTH OUR PREDE-CESSORS PASSED IT ON TO US WHEN THEY CHOSE TO DESTROY THEM-SELVES...
MY BROTHER ISN'T DEAD!

AZUSA'S STILL ALIVE. I KNOW IT...
!
ALIVE?! THERE'S NO WAY...

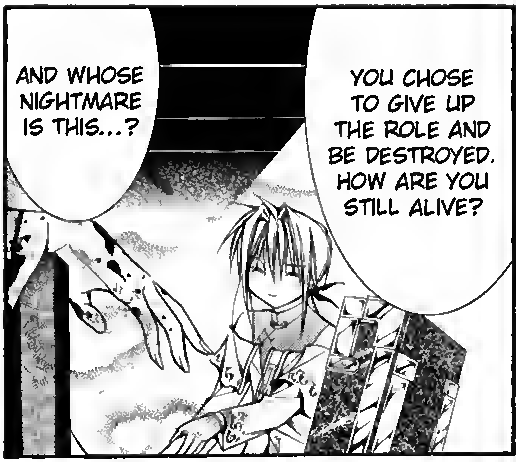
I WISH I COULD HAVE MET THIS GUY. HE SOUNDS A LOT MORE INTERESTING THAN HIRUKO.
HE IS...
WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS THIS AZUSA...
AS HIS SUCCESSOR, HIRUKO SHOULD KNOW WHERE HE IS, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE KEEPING THAT UNDER WRAPS.
HMM?
CLACK
I WANT TO SEE HIM TOO...
ONLY ABLE TO RELIVE MY MEMORIES IN MY DREAMS... I CAN'T STAND IT...
LET'S TRY THE SISTER.
HIRUKO...?!
STOP ...
CLATTER
!

SLEEP NOW ... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
AZUSA...
AH...
HEH HEH... I CAN LEAVE HER IN THE DREAM UNTIL SHE BECOMES DERANGED.
...UNLESS I TELL YOU WHERE AZUSA IS, IS THAT IT?

YOU KNOW HOW MUCH MIZUKI HAS SUFFERED ...
YOU KNEW... WHERE HE IS? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANY-THING?
WHACK
SHE SHOULDN'T BE HERE...
TAKE HER UPSTAIRS ...
?
FINE ...

A NIGHT-MARE ?!
IS HE... INSIDE ..?!
CLATCH
!
A TRANCE THAT ONLY A BAKU CAN FEEL...
IT'S EVEN SCARING ME...
SUCH A GLOOMY, SINISTER DREAM...
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

TO THINK THAT YOU WOULD CALL ON ME CHITOSE
IS THAT AZUSA? IS THIS AN ILLUSION ...?
HA HA... AMAZING.


AND WHOSE NIGHTMARE IS THIS...?
YOU CHOSE TO GIVE UP THE ROLE AND BE DESTROYED. HOW ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?

CHITOSE KURO-SU'S...
WHOSE...? IT'S CHITOSE'S.

WHY IS IT IN THE CASE?!
CHITOSE?
IS THIS *HIS* DREAM?!

HE'S TOTALLY LOST HIS MIND AND IS CONSUMED BY HIS DESIRES...
HE'S MUCH BETTER THAN HIRUKO...

YES... HIS MISERABLE EXISTENCE WAS BURNED INTO THE MEMORY OF THE FIRST BAKU.
IT CAME FLOWING INTO ME...
THE PLACE WHERE I WILL DIE...
...AS I STRUGGLED WITH THE TORMENT OF A BAKU'S INSATIABLE DESIRES...

A MEMORY...FROM SEVEN YEARS AGO...

HE WAS LOCKED IN A FILTHY STOREROOM, SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ABUSE...

Ha ha, he'd dine on feces!
YES, HOW EXCITING!
HMM... WE COULD BREAK HIS LIMBS AND THROW HIM IN THE SEPTIC TANK...
AAAAAH!!
NGH...
WE COULD GOUGE OUT HIS EYES AND LISTEN TO HIM SCREAM.
AGH.
BUT THEN WE'D LOSE OUR FAVORITE TOY.
YES... SO WE MUST BE GENTLE...
HA HA, I DON'T KNOW ANY GREATER PLEASURE THAN THIS.
LET'S PLAY A DIFFERENT GAME...

THE ABUSE GOT WORSE AND WORSE.
THE ONLY THING HE WAS FREE TO DO WAS THINK.
TO ESCAPE REALITY CHITOSE COULD ONLY FANTASIZE ABOUT AN UNATTAINABLE HAPPINESS.
AH...
BUT EVENTUALLY IT STOLE HIS HEART, BECOMING A DELUSION.
IT WAS A TRANQUIL PLACE FOR CHITOSE TO ESCAPE TO, IF ONLY IN HIS DREAMS.
HA HA ...
BUT...
CHITOSE'S NAME?

STILL, HE HAD TO WAKE FROM HIS DREAMS SOMETIME AND FACE HIS WRETCHED REALITY.

HE SUNK DEEPER INTO THE DELUSION, CREATING A DISTORTION BETWEEN REALITY AND FANTASY.

UNTIL THE DISTORTION ENGULFED THE FANTASY COMPLETELY... GIVING BIRTH TO A NEW NIGHTMARE.

...SOMETHING FAR CRUELER THAN THE LIFE HE HAD ENDURED.

I HAD FOUND MY OPPORTUNITY FOR DESTRUCTION.

IT WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE EVEN A BAKU LOSE HIS MIND...
THE NIGHT-MARE GREW WORSE OVER TIME...
IT BECAME UNIMAGIN-ABLY GRUESOME AND ATROCIOUS.

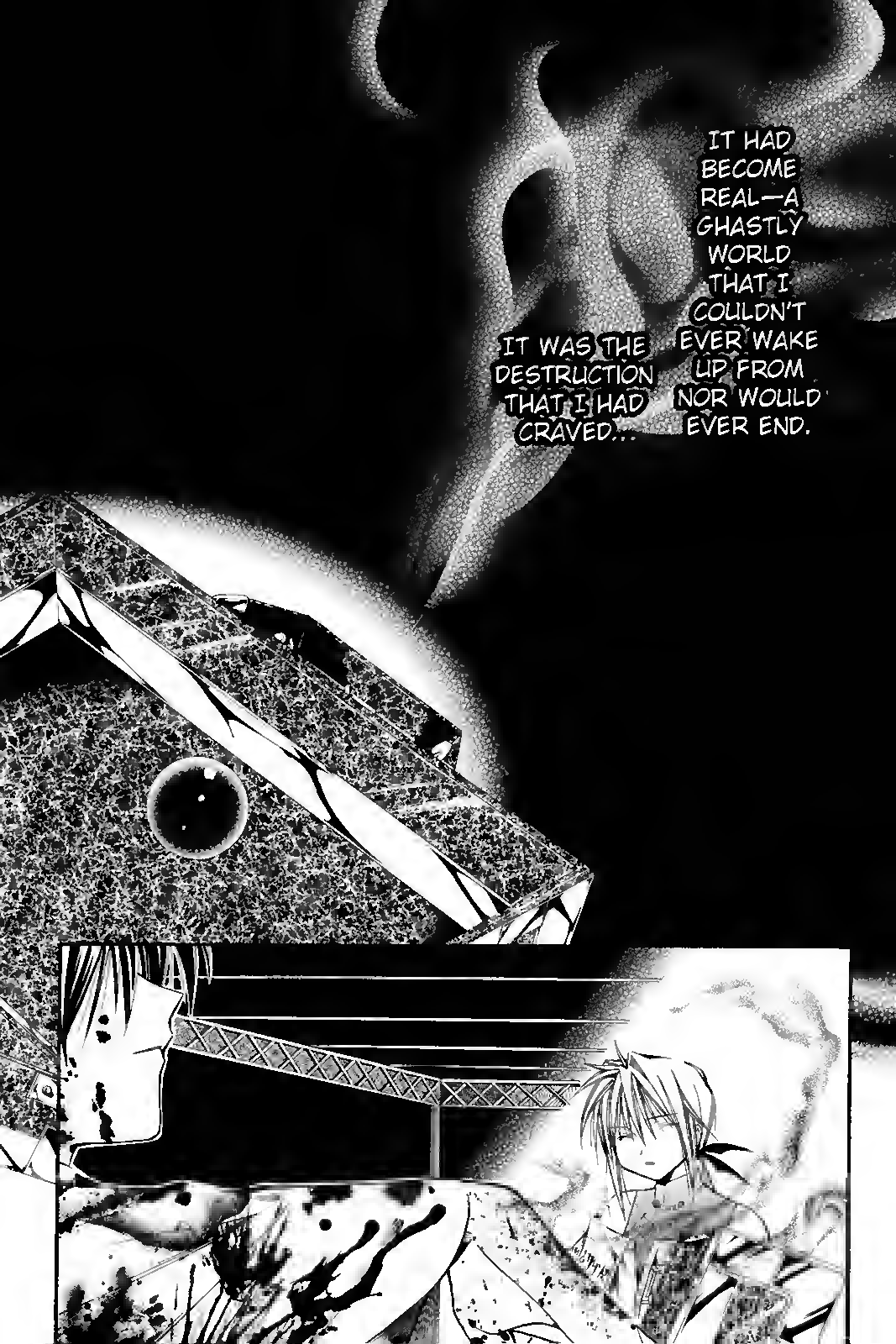
THIS IS WHERE THE FIRST BAKU'S MEMORIES END.

THREE YEARS AFTER I BECAME A BAKU, I FOUND CHITOSE LYING IN THE RUBBLE FROM THE EARTHQUAKE.
I WONDER WHO HAD PULLED HIM OUT OF THE STOREROOM...
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE.
SOMEONE HAD BEEN WATCHING ME FROM AFAR... AND IN MY DREAMS...
BUT YOU'RE NOT THE BAKU I KNOW.
AND THEN...
THAT WAS HOW I MET CHITOSE...
I'VE COME FOR YOU.

THEN...
WE WENT TO THE DELIRIUM— WHERE FANTASIES BECOME REALITY.
妄魎堂
A NIGHTMARE BORN OF A FANTASY...
IT WAS IN ONE OF THOSE ROOMS THAT CHITOSE'S FANTASY BECAME A REALITY.

IT WAS NO ORDINARY DREAM THAT I COULD EAT...

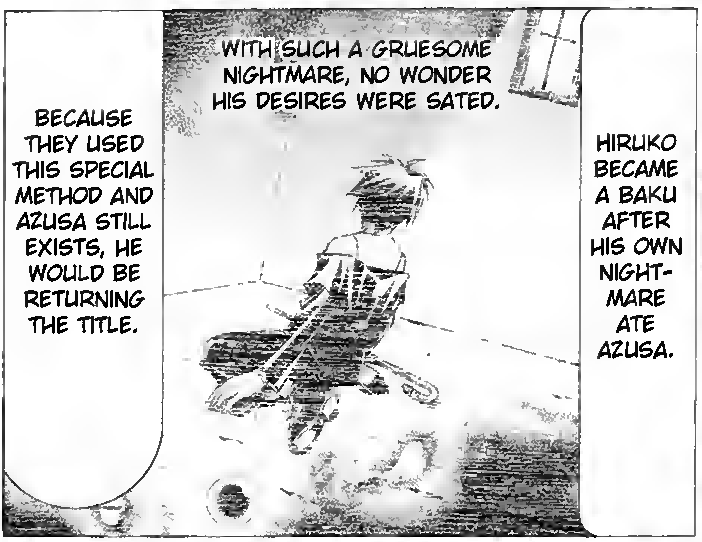
...INSTEAD,
IT ATE ME.

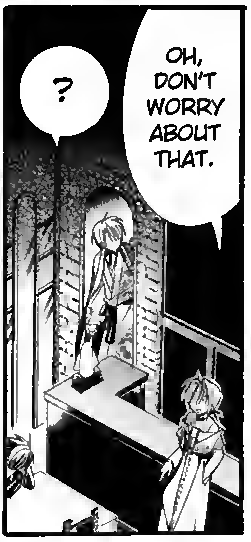

IT HAD BECOME REAL—A GHASTLY WORLD THAT I COULDN'T EVER WAKE UP FROM NOR WOULD EVER END.
IT WAS THE DESTRUCTION THAT I HAD CRAVED...

HE'S SOMETHING IN BETWEEN...
HE'S NEITHER A PERSON NOR A BAKU.
HE WALLOWS IN SUFFERING, UNABLE TO DIE...
WITH ONLY THE BAKU'S ETERNAL DESIRE FOR NIGHTMARES LEFT...
AND NOW HE'S FOUND A NEVER-ENDING SUPPLY!
...HE'D BE MUCH WORSE THAN ME! WHAT FUN!
IF AZUSA BECAME A BAKU AGAIN...
TAP TAP
HEH HEH... BUT THAT'S HERESY.
IF...
IF SUCH AN EXTREMIST COULD BE CALLED BACK TO REALITY...
MAKE AZUSA THE BAKU?!

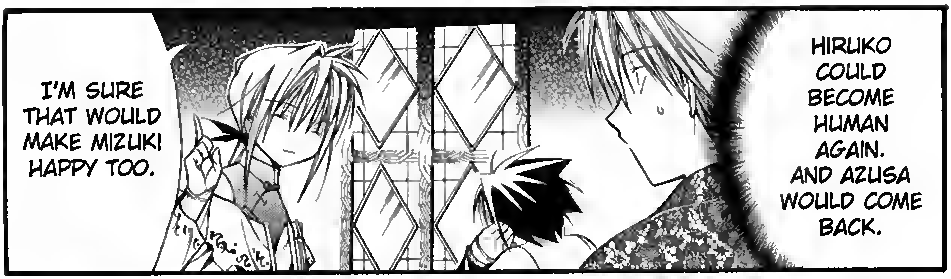
IF HE PASSES IT ON THEN HE GETS DESTROYED ...

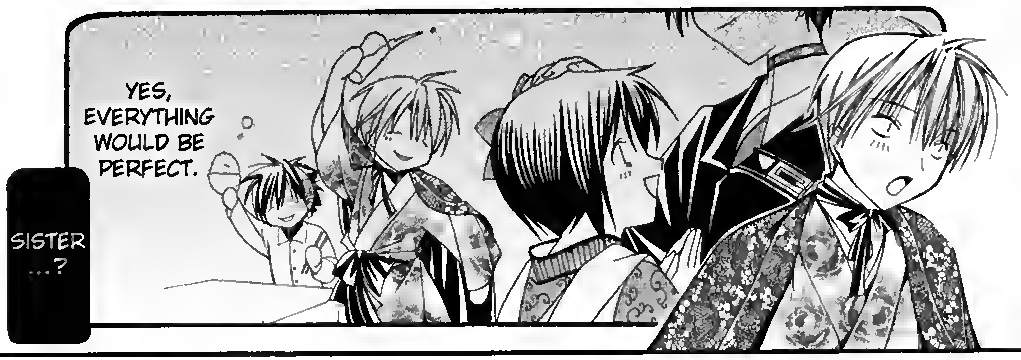
WAS HE HERE THE WHOLE TIME?
THEN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO HIRUKO?!


BECAUSE THEY USED THIS SPECIAL METHOD AND AZUSA STILL EXISTS, HE WOULD BE RETURNING THE TITLE.
WITH SUCH A GRUESOME NIGHTMARE, NO WONDER HIS DESIRES WERE SATED.
HIRUKO BECAME A BAKU AFTER HIS OWN NIGHT-MARE ATE AZUSA.


?
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.

HE'D JUST GO BACK TO BEING HUMAN.
HIRUKO WON'T BE DESTROYED. EVERYTHING WOULD JUST REVERT BACK TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE.


I'M SURE THAT WOULD MAKE MIZUKI HAPPY TOO.
HIRUKO COULD BECOME HUMAN AGAIN. AND AZUSA WOULD COME BACK.


YES, EVERYTHING WOULD BE PERFECT.
SISTER ...?

MIZUKI ...?
WHO IS THAT...?
?!

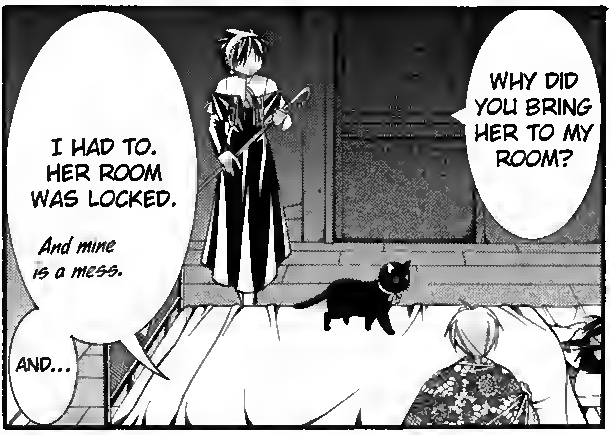
HA HA! HE'S SO LOST IN THE NIGHTMARE THAT HE'S FORGOTTEN HIS OWN SISTER..
NO! IT CAN'T BE...!
I'M BORED OF THIS REALITY... GOOD-BYE...
WAIT! DID YOU REALLY —!
IT CAN'T BE!
MIZUKI'S BEEN WAITING FOR SO LONG!
SHE'S BEEN THINKING OF YOU ALL THIS TIME...
THIS... THIS IS TOO TRAGIC.
HIRUKO...
IS THAT WHY YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING BEFORE...?

MAYBE IF WE TELL HER, SHE'LL HAVE A DELICIOUS NIGHTMARE.
DON'T YOU DARE!
SO...
YES, I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO POINT IN USING HER NOW.
THAT'S ENOUGH!
HOW DO I GET HIRUKO TO RETURN THE BAKU BACK TO AZUSA?
HOW COULD I MAKE HIM WANT TO...?
HMM... MAYBE I SHOULD INVESTIGATE HIS PAST...
WITH A HISTORY THAT TRAGIC, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING I CAN USE.

HUH...?
BLANK
?!
I'LL WEAR HIM DOWN UNTIL HE DOES WHAT I WANT.
HOW DID CHITOSE KUROSE FIND HIMSELF IN THAT SITUATION?
DID HE DO SOMETHING?
I WANT TO SEE YOU REMEMBER WITH DREAD.
WHAT...? HAS HE FORGOTTEN?!
YOU COULDN'T FORGET SOMETHING LIKE THAT EVEN IF YOU WANTED TO.
IS THERE MORE TO THIS...?
DID AZUSA NOT TELL ME THE WHOLE STORY?

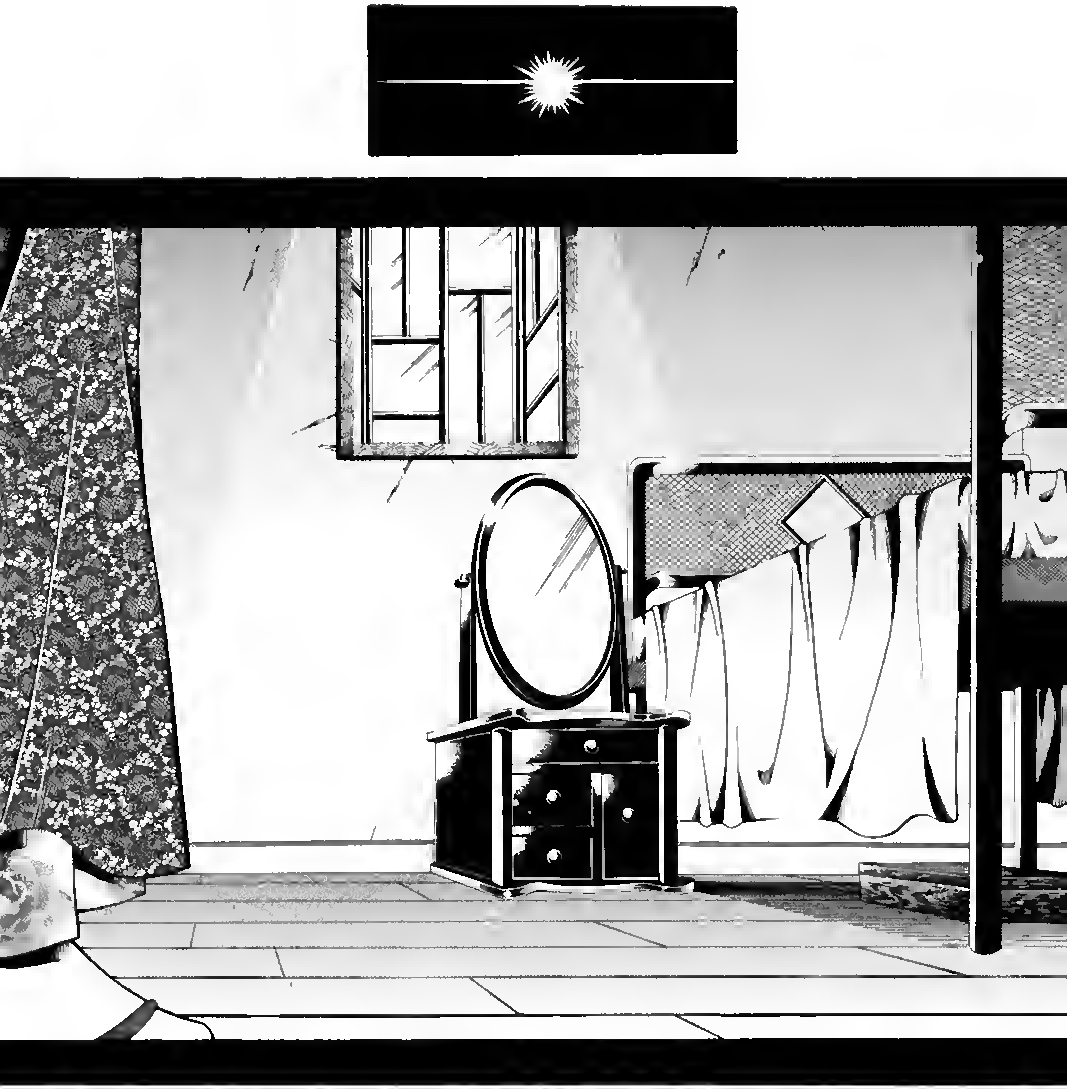
I'LL FIND OUT FOR YOU.
YOU INTRIGUE ME. LOOKS LIKE I'VE FOUND SOMETHING TO OCCUPY MY TIME...
HA HA...
AND DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS...
LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
DING

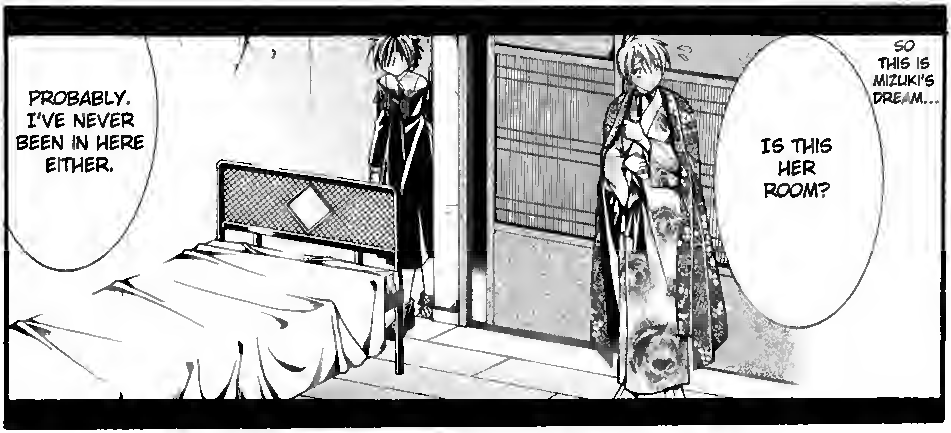
The Fortieth Night: Recollection



SHE'LL BE TRAPPED IN HER NIGHTMARE... WASTING AWAY UNTIL SHE'S RELEASED.
SHE WAS PUT TO SLEEP BY A BAKU.
YOU'RE GOING TO GO RELEASE HER, RIGHT?! I CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND WAITING...
I CAN'T!
NO...!
PLEASE, HIRUKO! TAKE ME WITH YOU!
!
HIFUMI IS SO HONEST ABOUT HIS FEELINGS.

STAY OUT OF MY WAY.




SO THIS IS MIZUKI'S DREAM...
IS THIS HER ROOM?
PROBABLY. I'VE NEVER BEEN IN HERE EITHER.

AHH...
WA...
WAH.
SHH!
PHEW
OH, REALLY? HA HA, SO YOU'RE NOT...
A CHILD'S... MIZUKI'S CRYING.
WAAAH
WHY'S IT COMING FROM INSIDE A BOX?
WAAAH...
WAAAH
WHAT'S WITH THIS MIRROR?
AND WHERE IS MIZUKI?

ONLY ABLE TO RELIVE MY MEMORIES IN MY DREAMS... I CAN'T STAND IT...
IS THIS SOMETHING FROM MIZUKI'S MEMORIES?
ARE THEY TURNING UP IN HER DREAMS?
IT'S REFLECTING A DIFFERENT ROOM
IS SHE SOMEWHERE IN THIS ROOM...?
WHAM
AAH!
BOO!
ACK!

!
THERE'S ANOTHER ROOM BEHIND THIS WALL!
WAS THAT MIZUKI ...?
WHA?
FSSH
IT CAME FROM IN HERE?!
MIZUKI!
DID I SCARE YOU? AZUSA, SAY SOMETHING!
THIS MUST BE THE EN-TRANCE TO HER PAST.

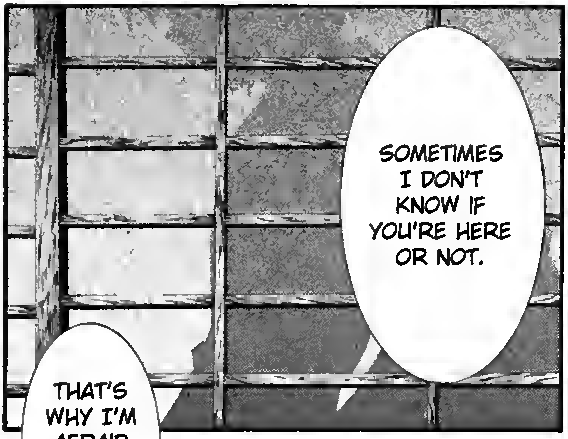
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU JUMPED OUT OF THE CLOSET AT ME?
...NINE TIMES.
I WAS ONLY SURPRISED THE FIRST TIME. NOW IT'S JUST ANNOYING. IF YOU DON'T QUIT, I'M GOING TO GET ANGRY.
THEN GET ANGRY!
YOU'RE ALWAYS SO OUT OF IT AND LIFELESS... I MISS HOW YOU USED TO BE.

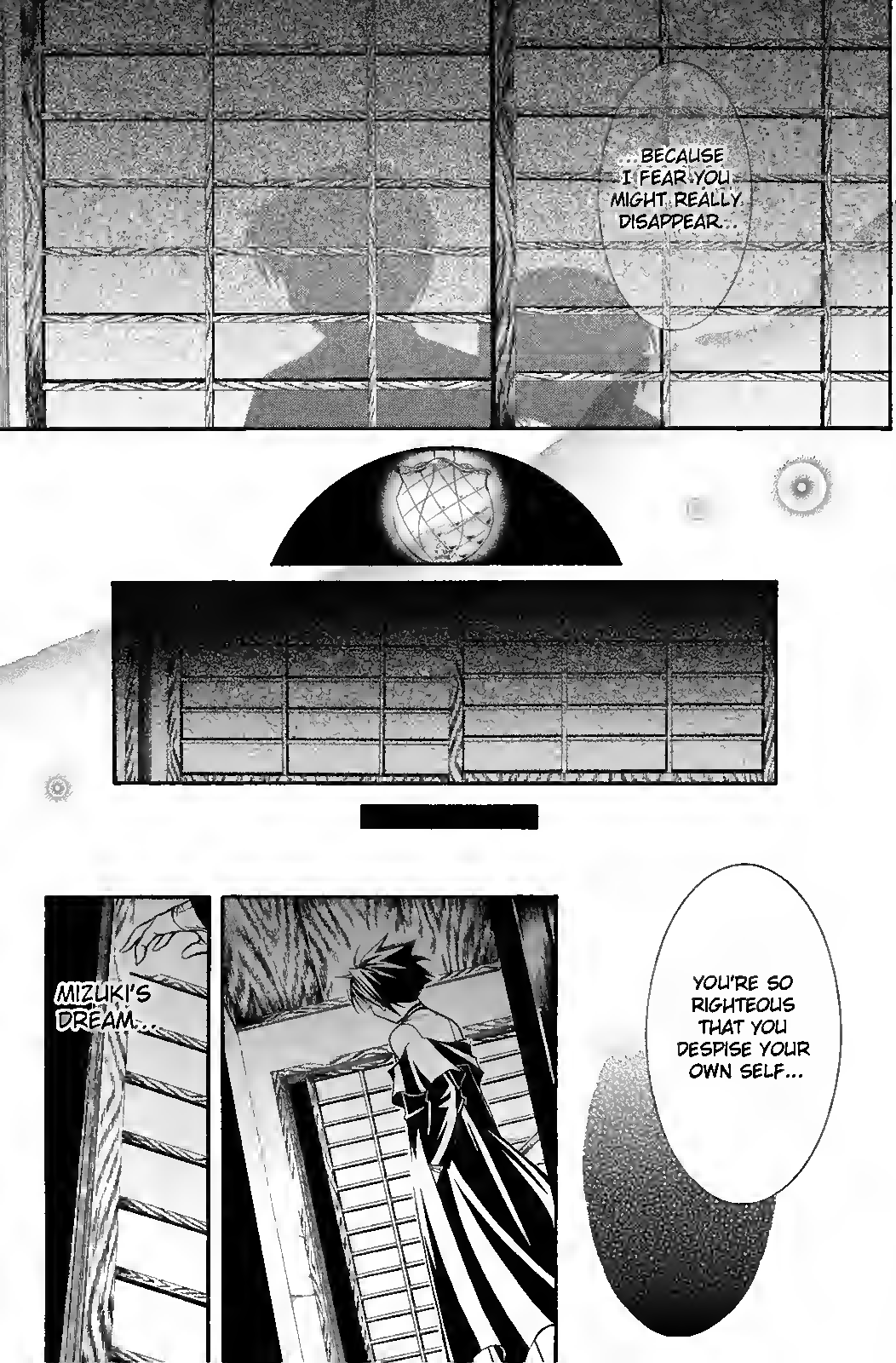
SAY SOME-THING ...
THAT MIRROR ...
SO IT WAS REFLECTING MIZUKI'S MEMORIES.
THIS MUST BE MIZUKI'S CHILDHOOD HOME. I WONDER WHY AZUSA IS SO DEPRESSED ...
HE WAS THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF A MEMBER OF THE NOUVEAU RICHE...
ILLEGITIMATE...

HIS MOTHER ...

HIS MOTHER DIED OF SHAME... HE'S TORMENTED BY THE GUILT.

WOULD I FEEL THE SAME?




...BECAUSE I FEAR YOU MIGHT REALLY DISAPPEAR...
MIZUKI'S DREAM...
YOU'RE SO RIGHTEOUS THAT YOU DESPISE YOUR OWN SELF...

IT'S RELIVING THESE MEMORIES WITH AZUSA.

...
NATURE IS SO BEAUTIFUL!

CLATCH!

YOU NEED TO GET OUT MORE, AZUSA!

HIRUKO, WHAT'S GOING ON?! THE ROOM DISAPPEARED AND...
SHH!
IT'S CONNECTED TO ANOTHER MEMORY
SHE'S RETURNED TO HER CHILDHOOD SELF, SO IF SHE SEES US HERE SHE'LL GET CONFUSED.
OH! ARE YOU GOING TO DRAW SOMETHING? HOW UNUSUAL!
But that's the box lid!
HE LOOKS HAPPIER. I'M GLAD I BROUGHT HIM OUT...
I WAS THINKING ABOUT ITS FUTURE...
I SEE.
IT'S SO PRETTY. BUT IT ONLY HAS WINGS AND NO BODY.
WHY A BUTTERFLY AND NOT THE COCOON?
OH... I FORGOT.
KUKU-JI
KUKU-JI

IT WAS EATEN... BY A SPIDER.
I WANT TO BE EATEN BY SOMEONE AND DISAPPEAR TOO...
I'M GOING TO LOOK AFTER IT UNTIL IT COMES OUT.
WHY ARE YOU TAKING THE COCOON HOME?
SNAP
LET'S GO HOME.
AND I'LL SHOW AZUSA WHEN IT FLIES OFF.

THEN HE WON'T THINK SUCH DEPRESSING THOUGHTS ABOUT BEING EATEN...!
MIZUKI...?
WHO IS THAT...?
AND YET...
MIZUKI WAS SO YOUNG WHEN SHE STARTED WORRYING ABOUT AZUSA...
GRIN
SORRY I HIT YOU.
EVEN IF HE RETURNS, HE'LL JUST ABANDON HER AGAIN. TSUKISHIRO... IT'S POINTLESS WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO.
dunno.
THE MOON IS SO BEAUTIFUL...
IS HE EMBARRASSED? ...OR IS HE SNEERING?
ALWAYS CARRYING THAT CASE AROUND... YOU WERE ONLY THINKING OF HER!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD ON YOU, HIDING IT FROM MIZUKI...
GLACIER
ANOTHER MEMORY...

AZUSA, I HEARD A RUSTLING NOISE. IT MUST HAVE GROWN WINGS!
WE SHOULD RELEASE IT HERE WHERE WE FOUND IT.
THAT COCOON ...
IT'S PROBABLY GROWN INTO...
WAAAA
CLICK
ALL MY EFFORTS WEREN'T IN VAIN!
WHEN AZUSA SEES IT FLY AWAY WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL WINGS...
...MAYBE HE'LL CHEER UP TOO!
HIRUKO.
YES ...

A MOTH.
WA...
WAAAH!
WAH.
HA HA ...
HA...

HA HA HA HA!
?!
HE LAUGHED ...
WE BOTH THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE A BUTTERFLY. HOW FUNNY!
AZUSA ...
... LAUGHED.
YES.
WE'RE SUCH IDIOTS.
HEE HEE HEE

THAT'S WHY IT WAS SUCH A SPECIAL MEMORY...
I SEE.
MIZUKI ...
LET'S GO HOME.
NO ..
AZUSA?
HIRUKO?!
THAT'S PART OF HER DREAM.
WHAT?!
ARE HER MEMORIES MIXING WITH THE PRESENT ?!

CHITOSE'S MY OPPORTUNITY FOR DESTRUCTION...

SWOOSH
HOME'S OVER HERE, AZUSA! DON'T GO!
LET'S GO HOME!

CHITOSE...

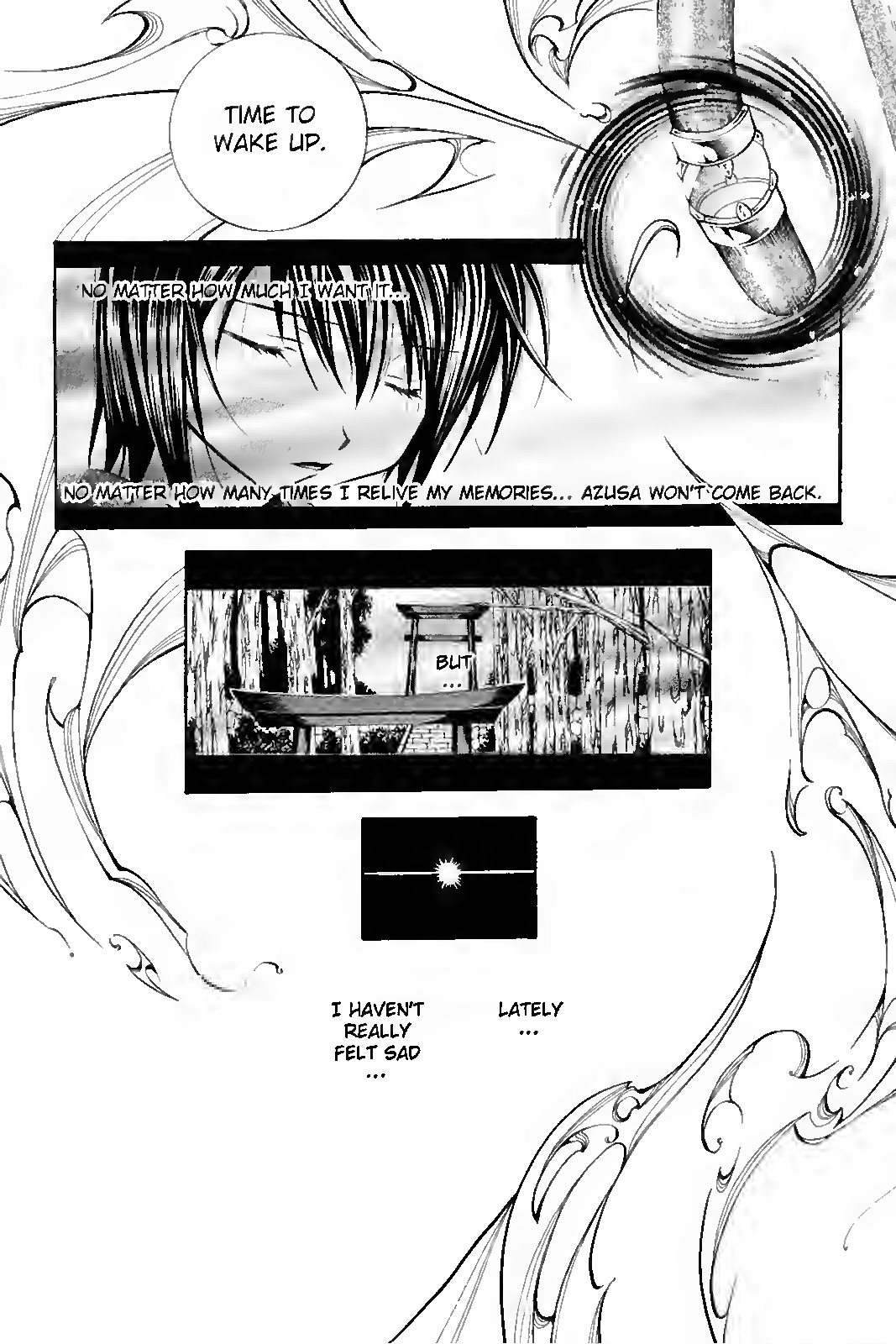
NO...!

LET ME SEE YOU SMILE...
STAY WITH ME...
DON'T GO!
TMP

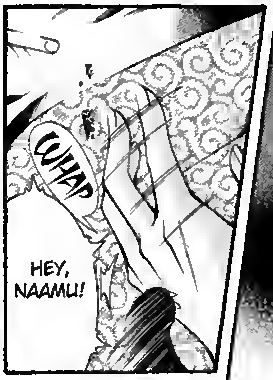
GRIP
CHITOSE KUROSU IS HERE.
HIRUKO
...
YOU SAID THAT AS LONG AS I'M HERE, AZUSA WOULD COME BACK SOME DAY.
YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT, RIGHT?
MIZUKI?

I'M ALL RIGHT, HIRUKO.
THIS IS HOW MY DREAM ALWAYS ENDS...
I'M SORRY. I MADE YOU MENTION THAT NAME AGAIN...
AZUSA NOT COMING BACK HAUNTS MY DREAMS...
IS MIZUKI BACK TO NORMAL?!
I DO REALIZE IT.

I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU. I WON'T MAKE YOU SAD.
I'LL STAY AT THE SILVER STAR FOREVER...


TIME TO WAKE UP.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT IT...
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I RELIVE MY MEMORIES... AZUSA WON'T COME BACK.
BUT ...
I HAVEN'T REALLY FELT SAD ...
LATELY ...

The Forty-First Night: The Cane



AAAAH!
SPLASH
FWOOM
LUCKILY IT DIDN'T—
ACK!
CRUMBLE
HIRUKO'S A BAKU SO HE'LL RECOVER.. BUT THE PROBLEM IS...
OH NO! THIS IS TERRIBLE!

A CANE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ACCESSORY FOR A BAKU. WHEN HIRUKO FINDS OUT...
SHAKE
SHAKE
And after I broke his case...
WHAT DO I DO? I CAN'T WAKE HIM UP!
NGH
WHAT TO DO?!
!
HIRUKO! YOUR CUSTOMER IS WAITING!
DOOR
I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE...!
?!
FLINCH
G-GOOD EVENING! I'M HIRUKO.
ZIP
ZIP

Umm
THERE'S BEEN A MONSTER SHOWING UP IN MY DREAMS...
Can I trust this guy?
SO YOU JUST WANT ME TO GET RID OF IT, RIGHT?
HIFUMI...
WHY YES, I WISHED UPON A STAR THAT I COULD BECOME HANDSOME LIKE HIFUMI AND IT CAME TRUE. ☆
WHAT A STRANGE PERSON...
UH, SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
...
WHAT TO DO?
WHAT TO DO?
CREAK
GLOOP
I MEAN, YOU'RE ASLEEP THIS IS YOUR DREAM!
OF COURSE NOT—
UMM... NOTHING HAPPENED.

NGH...
WHAT HAPPENED...
HUFF
HUFF
WHACK
HIRUKO?!
AAAAH! A MONSTER!
GET OUTTA HERE!
SEE? I GOT RID OF THE MONSTER FOR YOU. YOU CAN GO NOW.
UH... TIME TO WAKE UP (OR WHATEVER).
I'M NEVER COMING BACK!
DING

SQUISH
WHA... WHAT HAPPENED ...
SQUISH
UGH...
M-MY CANE!
Ah!
Ah...
HIRUKO... I... I...
CLACK
I SHOULD PROBABLY CONFESS.
UP!
THIS MUST BE HIFUMI'S WORK.
GRR
GRR
A HUNCH

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
HA HA... DID I...?
LIKE I'M GOING TO CONFESS!
I'M SO ASHAMED OF YOU! WETTING THE BED AT YOUR AGE?!
SQUISH
TIED UP
AS IF YOU COULD DECEIVE ME!

安鏡堂
SO...
YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU WITH THE CANE, LIKE I DID WITH THE CASE.
I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO ASK. I'M A FAILURE AS A BAKU. WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
WHY ARE YOU WEARING A BAG ON YOUR HEAD?
No, don't...!
POOF
HIRUKO, IS THAT YOU?! THAT HEAD—!
Sorry
FOOSH
HOW USEFUL!
SCRUB
SCRUB
MAKE IT GROW...

HOW ARE YOU, LITTLE BIRD?
ANOTHER WEIRD FANTASY ...
OH!
IS THIS HAIRSTYLE WHAT'S POPULAR THESE DAYS?
I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND YOU YOUNG KIDS!
YOU SHOULD TALK.
ANY-WAY, THE CANE ...
OH YES. BUT HIRUKO ...
YOU ONLY BURNED THE WOODEN PART, RIGHT? WHY DON'T YOU JUST REPLACE IT?
Oh, that's right.
The center part is still fine.
LEAVE IT TO ME. I'LL MAKE YOU AN EVEN BETTER ONE!
SHUF SHUF
YOU CAN TRUST KAIRI. HE'S AN ARTIST. ♪

A FEW DAYS LATER
I'M GLAD EVERYTHING'S BACK TO NORMAL...
HE'S SO HAPPY THE CANE'S BACK
LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR DREAM.
AN EVEN BETTER ONE, HUH...
HE DIDN'T NEED TO...
CLICK
AT LAST... SOME FOOD! NO THANKS TO HIFUMI!
OH, IT IS BETTER!
Uh oh...
SLEEP—
BOOM
AND UNTIL THE CANE COULD BE REPAIRED BY A PROFESSIONAL—
...HIFUMI'S SCREAMS COULD BE HEARD COMING FROM HIRUKO'S ROOM.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 6: END

あとがき

AFTERWORD

AFTER-WORD!

Shin Mashiba here!
We're up to volume six already.
I want to thank my editor, Yuki Saeki, everyone who helped me, and the readers. Thanks to them, my fragmented ideas are now a completed work.

I'm hoping the next volume will be more organized.

Thanks for reading!

THANK YOU!

感謝

My special friends & assistants:
Wan Wan Shiroi
NEEMA
Riru Shirayuki

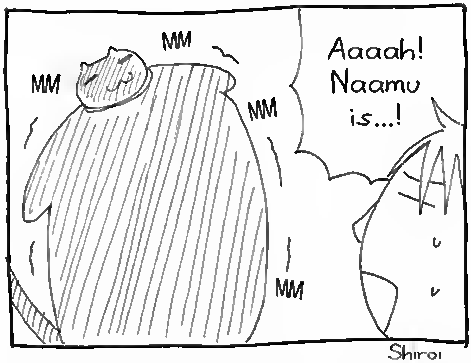
My lovely assistants:
Katsumi Arai
Mieko Araki
Kozue Okazawa
Yoshimi Shiroko
Takecchi
MOAI

A big thank you to:
My editor Yuki Saeki
Editor-in-Chief
<Everyone at Square Enix>

Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

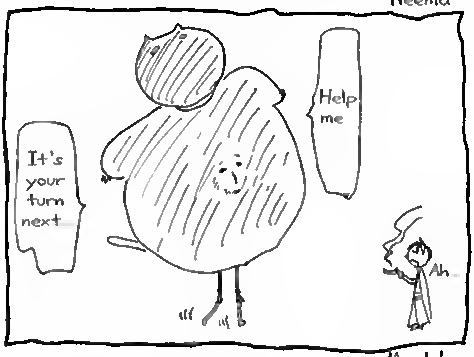
The next few pages are the usual ones from Shiroi. NEEMA also contributed to the tag-team manga (where we take turns drawing a panel) as well as an alternative telling of the manga. Let's Go!

The Entropy of Me and Naamu

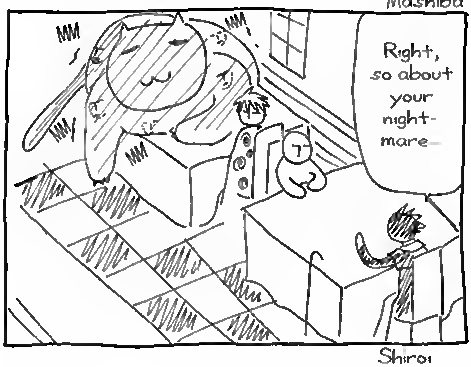


Shiroi

Neema

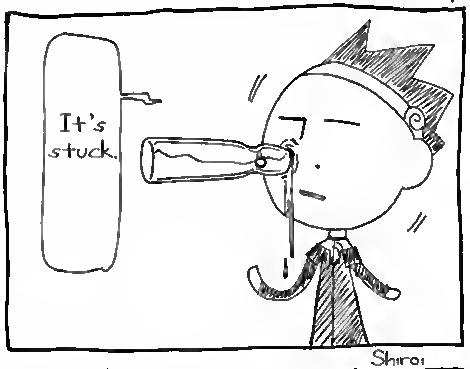


Mashiba

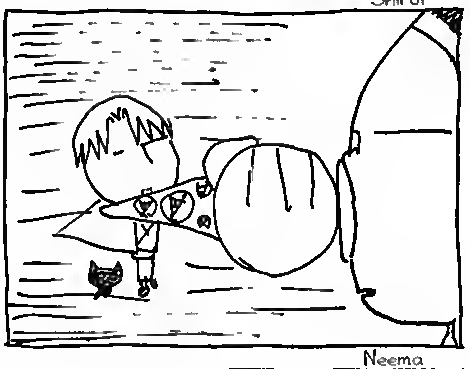


Shiroi

The Decadence of Me and Soda Pop



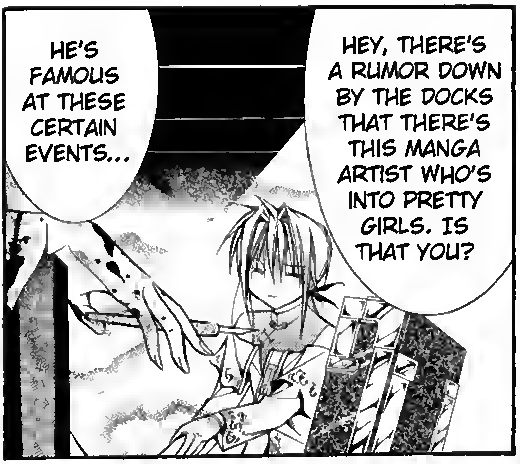
Shiroi



Neema

Shiroi

Mashiba


HE'S FAMOUS AT THESE CERTAIN EVENTS...
HEY, THERE'S A RUMOR DOWN BY THE DOCKS THAT THERE'S THIS MANGA ARTIST WHO'S INTO PRETTY GIRLS. IS THAT YOU?

CHITOSE KURO-SU'S...
WHO...? IT'S CHITOSE.

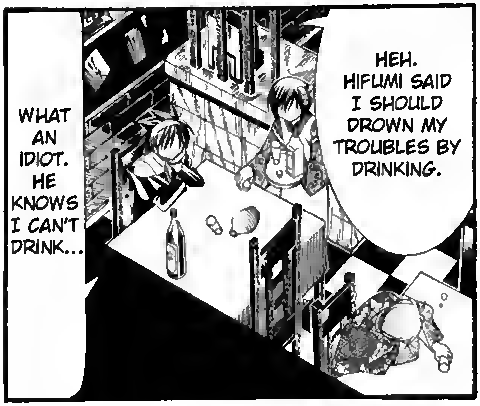
AGH! HE SAID MY PEN NAME!!
CHITOSE?
IS THAT *HIS* PEN NAME?!

HE'S TOTALLY LOST HIS MIND AND IS CONSUMED BY HIS DESIRES...
HE'S MUCH BETTER THAN HIRUKO...

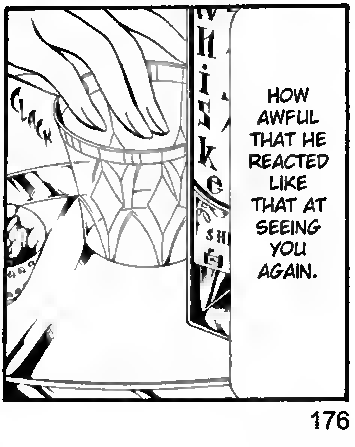
夢喰い

The One Hundred Million, Five Hundred and Twenty-Third Night: Akihabara Boy

Wan Wan Shiroi



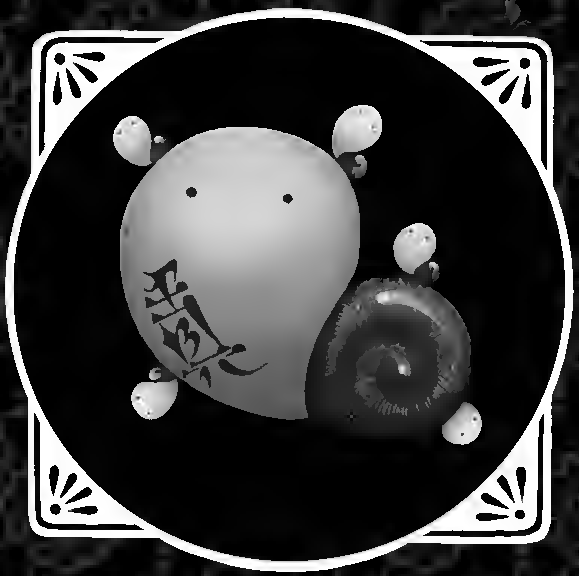
MAYBE HE WAS DISGUSTED THAT I WASN'T HUMAN...
DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?
IS IT BECAUSE I'M A CHITOSE? BUT WHY WOULD THAT BOTHER HIM THAT MUCH?



WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT HIM.
HE BEFRIENDED SOMEONE AS GUARDED AS YOU. I DON'T THINK HE'D BE BOTHERED BY THAT.
I'D JUST JOINED THE MANGA CLUB.
I MET HIM TWO YEARS AGO...
I MET HIM AT THE COMIC MARKET CONVENTION.
OH...

END

Dreams on the menu in this volume: a treasure's whereabouts depicted in a manga, a destiny controlled by the roll of the die, a nursery rhyme that is more than just words, a neighbor whose walls keep crashing in, a dog being tormented, a girl who isn't sure of her true self, and a haunting photo that isn't what it seems.

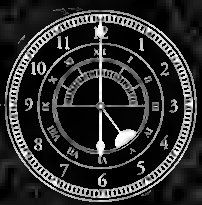


SHIN MASHIBA

A fantasy full of exciting and wonderful dreams! ★

...

Or so I say...



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs and being chased by time.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ⑥

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

English Adaptation: Kristina Blachere
Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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